the weekly Standard

OCTOBER 1, 2007

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GET A (SECOND) LIFE! JONATHAN V. LAST

Young Guns OF THE House GOP

- DUNCAN CURRIE on Paul Ryan
- FRED BARNES on Eric Cantor
- SAMANTHA SAULT on Kevin McCarthy

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This hybrid version of the North American Car of the Year is just one part of GM's commitment to energy diversity—creating vehicles that use fuels from diverse sources, reducing our dependence on petroleum and lowering emissions. I'm part of the team in Kansas City, Kansas that's working on a transformation in vehicles today.

Lily P. Aldana

Lead Systems Engineer

GM

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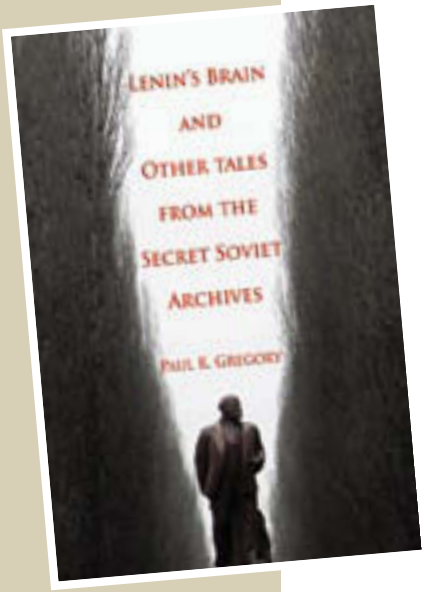

Lenin's Brain and Other Tales from the Secret Soviet Archives

PAUL R. GREGORY

The opening of the once-secret Soviet state and party archives in the early 1990s proved to be an event of exceptional significance. When Western scholars broke down the official wall of secrecy that had stood for decades, they gained access to intriguing new knowledge they had previously only been able to speculate about. In this fascinating volume, Paul Gregory takes us behind the scenes and into the archives to illuminate the dark inner workings of the Soviet Union.

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Paul R. Gregory, a Hoover Institution research fellow, holds an endowed professorship in the Department of Economics at the University of Houston, Texas, and is a research professor at the German Institute for Economic Research in Berlin.

November 2007, 250 pages
ISBN: 978-0-8179-4811-5
$25.00, cloth

ISBN: 978-0-8179-4812-2
$15.00, paper

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There are two basic categories of mortgages: fixed-rate mortgages and adjustable rate mortgages (ARM). Within each category, there are variations.

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Why do different types of mortgages offered at the same time have different rates? Mortgage interest rates vary based on who (borrower or lender) assumes more of the risk of interest rate hikes and for how long. Adjustable rate mortgages usually offer lower initial rates because the borrower assumes a greater share of the risk of interest rate increases. A fixed-rate mortgage usually has a higher initial interest rate because the lender assumes more of the risk of interest rate increases over the life of the mortgage.

fixed vs. adjustable in a nutshell

Mortgages with payment adjustments usually result in lower payments at first but expose you to the risk of possibly significant payment increases if interest rates go up. Mortgages with predictable, fixed payments could cost you more over the life of the mortgage, and require refinancing (and its costs) to take advantage of falling interest rates.

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The Weekly Standard (ISSN 1083-3013), a division of News America Incorporated, is published weekly (except the first week in January, third week in April, second week in July, and fourth week in August) at 1150 17th St., NW, Suite 505, Washington D.C. 20036. Periodicals postage paid at Washington, DC, and additional mailing offices. Postmaster: Send address changes to The Weekly Standard, P.O. Box 50108, Boulder, CO 80322-0108. For subscription customer service in the United States, call 1-800-274-7293. For new subscription orders, please call 1-800-283-2014. Subscribers: Please send new subscription orders and changes of address to The Weekly Standard, P.O. Box 50108, Boulder, CO 80322-0108. Please include your latest magazine mailing label. Allow 3 to 5 weeks for arrival of first copy and address changes. Canadian/foreign orders require additional postage and must be paid in full prior to commencement of service. Canadian/foreign subscribers may call 1-902-563-4723 for subscription inquiries. American Express, Visa/MasterCard payments accepted. Cover price, $3.95. Back issues, $3.95 (includes postage and handling). Send letters to the editor to The Weekly Standard, 1150 17th Street, N.W., Suite 505, Washington, DC 20036-4617. For a copy of The Weekly Standard Privacy Policy, visit www.weeklystandard.com or write to Customer Service, The Weekly Standard, 1150 17th St., NW, Suite 505, Washington, D.C. 20036. Copyright 2007, News America Incorporated. All rights reserved. No material in The Weekly Standard may be reprinted without permission of the copyright owner. The Weekly Standard is a registered trademark of News America Incorporated.

BPA INTERNATIONAL

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The Award of Awards

Almost a year ago The Scrapbook took genuine pleasure in noting the award of the Library of Congress's first John W. Kluge Prize for the Study of Humanity ($1 million) to historian John Hope Franklin, author of the classic *From Slavery to Freedom: A History of Negro Americans* (1947). This award, as we noted, could be added to a "hundred-plus honorary degrees, organizational presidencies, visiting lectureships, and appointments to advisory boards, delegations, and commissions" for Dr. Franklin, as well as a bewildering array of prizes, gold medals, and professional citations.

Frankly, our intent at the time was to drop a not-so-subtle hint to the Nobel Peace Prize people over in Oslo that Dr. Franklin, then 91 years old, was not getting any younger, and surely was past due for the honor accorded Jimmy Carter, Le Duc Tho, and Rigoberta Menchú. We regret to say that the folks at Nobel headquarters chose to ignore our advice, but The Scrapbook's disappointment is alleviated, to some degree, by the news (announced in the *Washington Post* last week) that this year's recipient of the Records of Achievement Award, given by the Foundation for the National Archives, and sponsored by the Boeing Company, is—yes, John Hope Franklin.

The award is described as "a celebration of history and those who preserve it," and Dr. Franklin now joins an honor roll of distinguished past recipients, including our particular favorite, Tom Brokaw (2005). The Scrapbook's congratulations to all involved.

But all these cheerful tidings got us thinking. Surely there must be some official recognition somewhere for distinguished Americans, like Dr. Franklin, who are officially recognized on a regular basis. Alas, our researches have turned up no such meta-award, to recognize distinguished Americans who have been officially, and repeatedly, recognized for their distinction. Sort of a Jean Hersholt Humanitarian Award for intellectuals.

So without further ado, let us propose one: We would favor joint government-corporate sponsorship, a framed citation or cut-glass bowl (perhaps both), a check, and a gala banquet covered by C-SPAN or PBS during Pledge Week. We would suggest naming this award for the sort of distinguished American bound to receive it, Dr. Franklin being a natural choice.

An obvious first recipient would be, say, Fr. Theodore M. Hesburgh, former president of Notre Dame, who holds the Guinness Book of World Records title for Most Honorary Degrees (150). Another inescapable choice would be poet Maya Angelou, whose official website describes her as "a remarkable Renaissance woman who is hailed as one of the great voices of contemporary literature," and recipient of dozens of prizes, citations, medals, Woman of the Year awards, and (by The Scrapbook's count) 35 honorary degrees—as well as, perhaps you saw this coming, the 2006 John Hope Franklin Award.

Well, maybe we'll call it the Father Hesburgh Award. ♦

Iraq Vignettes

Willy Stern, an old Scrapbook friend, has just returned after a stint in Iraq embedded with the First Cavalry Division out of Fort Hood, Texas. His embed was cosponsored by two running magazines, *Runner's World* (U.K.) and *Marathon & Beyond*. But he emailed us a few observations:

Should We Trust Gen. Petraeus? I spent two and a half hours with General David H. Petraeus, commander of the U.S. forces in Iraq. I met him at his Baghdad residence. (I can't disclose the location for security reasons.) We went for a 5.7-mile run and then did a 90-minute workout together at an improvised gym next to his office. We talked of many things—his family, his years at Princeton, the novels of David Ignatius, his favorite run at Fort Leavenworth, the proper technique for push-ups, the building of the Panama Canal, his philosophy on management and hiring, the time he got shot through the chest, his fastest marathon (sub-3 hours). . . . That story will appear in one of the magazines that sent me to Iraq. But I can say this: Like many of you, I've [watched] MoveOn.org, Rep. Lantos, Sen. Biden, et alia, desperately and crudely try to impeach the credibility of Gen. Petraeus.

I understand the peculiar and mean-spirited nature of partisan politics and posturing as well as the next guy. Nonetheless, these attacks are just plain wrong. They say more about the attackers than the attacked. Petraeus has his faults; he is off-the-charts competitive, way too intense, and focused in the extreme. But he is a man of uncommon integrity. He could no more lie or deceive Congress than he could rob a bank. I asked him, in front of several senior members of his staff, when was the last time he talked to his wife. "It's been a few weeks," he said, clearly sheepish at the lack of communication. But he told the truth. That's who he is—rock solid and honest to the core. Anyone in the U.S. Congress who thinks Petraeus is capable of deceit either doesn't know the man or is willfully lying. (Petraeus did say he was in daily email contact with his better half.)

Who Says Public Service Is Dead? It's 2:17 A.M., and I am in a holding area at a military base in Baghdad, waiting to ride in a Rhino (essentially an armored bus) to

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(Classic Steiner, reprinted from our issue of June 25, 1998)

take me down to the International Zone. I fall into conversation with a reservist, an enlisted man, who helps the U.S. Embassy do projects with the locals. I need help figuring out how to open and prepare an MRE, the "meals ready-to-eat" that soldiers subsist on in the field. He recommends the chicken, since they are best to "rat-f—." That's the Army term for combing through the MRE contents and picking out the best items. The chicken MREs have both M&Ms and pumpkin bread. Some hour into our conversation, he lets on that in civilian life, he is an attorney with a fairly powerful job in Washington, D.C. He volunteered for the gig in Iraq. "Nobody at the State Department would take it. Too dangerous. I thought it was the best way to serve my country." He rides around in the back of an armored Humvee and gets shot at sometimes.

Media Bias in Iraq? I'm Shocked . . . The two journalists are from the *Daily Telegraph* in London. It's 4 in the morning and we're waiting for a C-130 transport. They have a swagger about them that comes from having done three earlier tours in Iraq. The shooter is chain-smoking something that smells nasty, but he doesn't say much. The British scribe is talkative. He's explaining how to manipulate the PAOs, the Army personnel tasked with looking after journalists. "We're here to show that the surge isn't working. But we tell the PAO that we want an update on the surge. So he'll get us some colonel who will feed us the party line. We smile and write it down. Then we'll embed with a unit for a few days, do a patrol and get the quotes we need from the front-line soldiers. It's an easy story." ♦

A Stain on the Judiciary

The Scrapbook was saddened to learn that Custom Cleaners, the drycleaning establishment sued by Washington, D.C., judge Roy Pearson for $54 million after it lost a pair of his pants, is closing its doors because of lost revenue and escalating legal fees. Before they were sued by Judge Pearson, Jin and Soo Chung owned three drycleaning facilities; now they're down to one.

Claiming "mental suffering, inconvenience, and discomfort," Pearson's lawsuit was blown out of the water by a fellow judge, who ruled that "nothing in the law" supported Pearson's frivolous suit. The case has become a showpiece for tort-reformers, who took up the Chungs' cause, citing it as the epitome of a lawsuit-happy judicial system run amok. In response to Custom Cleaners' closing, Institute for Legal Reform president Lisa Rickard said the "abusive lawsuit is a sad reality and another reminder of the real effect that frivolous lawsuits have on businesses across the nation."

With any luck, the Chungs won't be the only ones out of work; the *Washington Post* is reporting that Pearson, who fell under the scrutiny of D.C.'s inspector general last month after public outrage mounted, will soon be removed from his position as an administrative judge. Couldn't happen to a nicer guy. ♦

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Casual

Get Back

Like a lot of you, I wasn't able to make it to Liverpool for International Beatles Week this August, though I hear it was fab; indeed, gear. In consolation I bought myself a pass to the annual Fest for Beatles Fans held outside Chicago, at the O'Hare Hyatt, in Rosemont, Illinois—a site less evocative than Liverpool, of course, but still prized by fans for being very near an airport that the Beatles once flew out of in 1965.

I grew up only 20 miles away and I remembered the Hyatt from my childhood. It was once the grandest hotel in the Chicago suburbs, marked by towers of reflective glass giving off mirrored images of the surrounding tract houses and off-ramps. Back in the seventies the Hyatt was the preferred venue for high school proms and wedding receptions for kids who couldn't afford the pricier digs in the Loop. I attended so many of these that my uncertain memories of the place are crowded with the dim figures of high school boys, gawky in their bad skin and long seventies hair and lavender tuxes with deep purple trim, vomiting in the backseat of rented white limousines.

That was a long time ago, however, when we were younger so much younger than today, and now the Hyatt is showing its age, despite an expensive renovation undertaken in the last year. This renovation was unpopular with Fest goers. Many of them have been coming to the same place for the same event since it was begun in 1975. Stairwells had been repositioned, the bar relocated, the check-in desk rearranged, meeting rooms reconfigured—disorienting the Beatles fans and upsetting the Fest's natural rhythms. They are a conservative bunch, Beatles fans, and set in their ways, as you might expect of people who have been listening to the same 200 three-minute songs for 40 years and have yet to get bored.

The homey, year-in-year-out rhythms of the Fest rise from a steady 4/4 drumbeat of activities: lectures, author Q&As, musicales, look-alike contests, seminars, break-out sessions, and celebrity appearances. Celebrity, of course, is a relative term; at the Fest it generally means someone—an old roadie or toady or hanger-on—who somehow once found himself in the orbit of real celebrities, meaning the Beatles, and is now cashing in. Just to give you an idea: One celebrity who appeared this year, Mark Hudson, owed his Fest fame to having actually served as producer of a solo album by a former Beatle. Unfortunately, the album was of very recent vintage, long past the Golden Age of Beatle solo works (if you believe there was such a Golden Age), and had been bought by nobody; and even more unfortunately, the Beatle was Ringo. Hudson got a big ovation anyway.

DARREN GYGI

How interesting you will find all these activities depends, I suppose, on how interesting you find the Beatles. But of course the Beatles are now so deeply woven into the popular culture of the last 40 years that it's not too much to say that to be bored by the Beatles is to be bored by the popular culture. (Not that there's anything wrong with that!) You'd also have to be bored by human psychology and by the workings of time itself. Walking through the Giant Beatles Marketplace, held in a vast ballroom in the Hyatt basement, I had the creepy sensation of seeing the detritus of my childhood suddenly set apart and poly-bagged into highly priced collectors' items: not only the mint-condition Beatles LPs but also a full set of Beatles cards ($200), a Beatles thermos and lunchbox ($150), Beatles bobble heads ($250), a plastic Beatles guitar with nylon strings ($125), and every issue of *Time*, *Look*, *Life*, and *Newsweek* that featured the Fab Four on the cover. I once owned all those magazines too—kept carelessly in a cardboard box, now lost to the ages. It was as though someone had rifled the bedroom closet of my 13-year-old self and put everything up for sale.

It was, as I say, a creepy feeling—but a feeling that most of the older Fest-goers evidently relish. They are too lighthearted a group to succumb to the sticky, downward pull of morbid nostalgia. Somehow for them the Beatles are still a source of pleasure, still fresh, a bubbly presence in their lives. Whether this testifies to their own resilience or to the intrinsic merits of the music the Beatles have left behind, I can't say. As on a Beatles record, there was scarcely a discordant note, not a trace of unpleasantness or remorse or acrimony. The only exception was an elderly fellow I met one afternoon. He had gathered his long, thin hair into a pony tail, and his T-shirt read: "Still Pissed at Yoko." But that's perfectly understandable.

Andrew Ferguson

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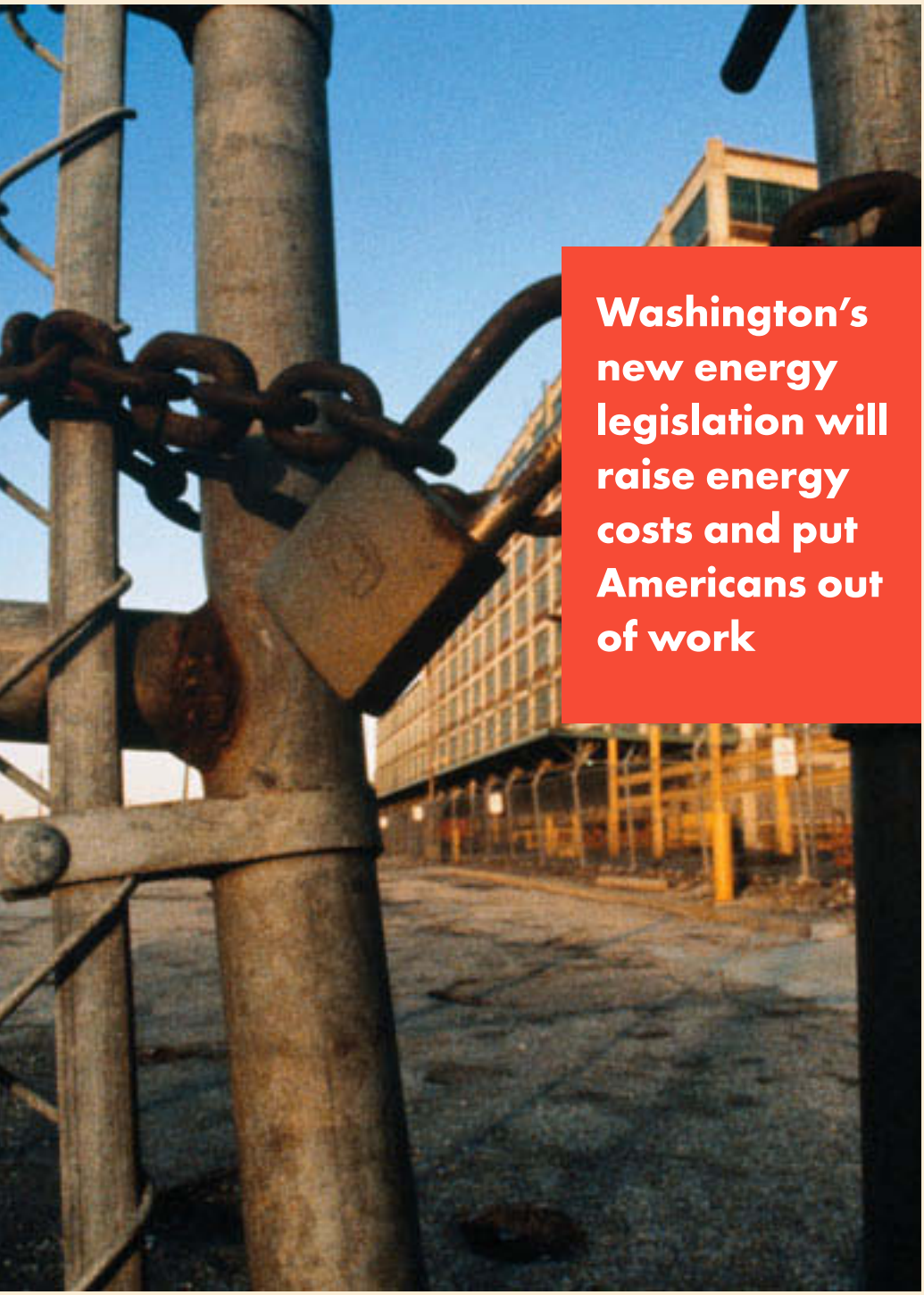
Can America's economy afford Congress' ~~energy~~ bill?

Layoffs, new taxes and cost spikes



Washington's new energy legislation will raise energy costs and put Americans out of work

Congress will soon consider sweeping new energy legislation that will raise energy taxes, cost American jobs and further limit the nation's access to domestic energy supplies.

The legislation's energy tax hikes and gasoline price controls will raise energy costs for American consumers, manufacturers and businesses – hurting economic growth and driving high-paying American jobs overseas. The legislation even reduces our ability to increase domestic oil and natural gas reserves here at home – increasing reliance on foreign sources of energy.

We need energy policies that support American jobs and increase supplies of energy from all sources to meet future generations' demand. Congress should reject these provisions of the energy bill and get to work on legislation to secure our energy future.

Reject Congress' Energy Bill

NAM National Association of Manufacturers

U.S. Chamber of Commerce

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Not So Fun

Matt Labash's article on corporate America ("Are We Having Fun Yet?" September 17) mandating fun in the workplace makes telecommuting look quite appealing. It's bad enough having to work for an American company that fails to respect or pay you adequately, exposes you to a toxic work environment, and treats you as white collar chattel. But Funsultants and Funtivities are the final straw. Workers of the World, Unite! Give us back our grim, merciless, robber baron bosses and sweatshops! Oh to be a breaker boy once again!

Les Phillips
Minneapolis, Minn.

The Great Warriors

Andrew Ferguson's review ("In the Trenches," September 17) of the National World War I Museum raises the question of "what the older Kansas Citians would have made of [the museum]." More importantly, what would the American veterans of the First World War think? Here's my guess at what they would say: "It's not how you remembered us, but, rather, what took you so long?! It's been ninety years since the Armistice, and only three of us doughboys are left. Why isn't our memorial, our national museum, on the National Mall in Washington? Why is it in Kansas City, Missouri?"

Suffice it, the great national landmark to WWI veterans is here in Kansas City, it's been here since 1926, and we did our homework for the new museum. Come judge for yourself whether or not we great-grandchildren accomplished our mission, the one carved in stone at the base of the original Memorial Tower: "In honor of those who served in the World War in defense of Liberty and our Country."

Eli Paul
Kansas City, Mo.

Primary History

Regarding Fred Barnes's article on the GOP presidential horserace ("And They're Really Off …" September 17), it's worth noting that at least since the 1940s, every GOP presidential nomination contest that did not feature an early

heir-apparent frontrunner settled down into a battle between the conservative and moderate wings of the party. Such has been the pattern from Taft-Dewey in 1948 to Taft-Eisenhower in 1952 to Goldwater-Rockefeller in 1964 to Reagan-Ford in 1976 (Ford being a special case as an unelected incumbent).

Giuliani seems to have locked up the moderate slot, while the battle still rages for the conservative slot among Romney, Thompson, and McCain. Although Romney seems to have the inside track by virtue of leading the polls in Iowa and New Hampshire, it would be odd if the presidential nomination for a southern and western-based conservative party came down to a choice between the former mayor of New York City and the former governor of Massachusetts.

Joe Salzgeber
Brunswick, Ohio

Reading Cather in Kabul

James Seaton's review ("Woman of Letters," September 17) of *The Cambridge Companion to Willa Cather* was quite enjoyable. Two years ago while working in Kabul, I was privileged to introduce a young Afghan woman named Mariam to Cather's writings. She went on to write her senior paper in English at Kabul University on Cather and her works, finding many similarities between the harsh lives of women in Afghanistan and those of pioneer women in the United States over a century ago. We enjoyed discussing the commonality of human relationships despite separation by religion and culture—women making sacrifices in their own lives in order to give their children a better life; families frowning on the choice of partners; and human frailties and strengths in dealing with tragedies.

Virginia K. Sheffield
Arlington, Va.

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Office of National Drug Control Policy

DO YOU SPEAK TEEN?

mnE Ps dnt bleev der is a gNR8N d/c b/t em n thr teen. (Text Message Translation: Many parents don't believe there is a generation disconnect between them and their teen.) How much do parents really know about their teen's world? Especially as teens adapt to new technologies so quickly?

Unfortunately, parents still see only a glimpse of the world in which their teens live. The numbers are alarming:

- 80% of parents believe drugs and alcohol are usually not available at parties their teens attend, but the reality is sobering: 50% of teen partygoers attend parties where alcohol, drugs or both are available.[1]
- Prescription drugs, illegally used to get high, are the second most abused type of drug by teens, right behind marijuana.[2]
- The story isn't much different online: Three-fourths of teens report that their parents "almost never" monitor the Web sites they frequent or the time they spend online.[3]

There is good news. The majority of teens still report that their parents—not their peers or the media—have the biggest influence on their decision to stay drug-free. To learn more about how parents like you are connecting better with their teens, try these Action Items and report back at www.TheAntiDrug.com/ParentChronicles:

- Type "smoking weed" into a Web search engine and see what your teen is exposed to.
- Find out what the drug slang terms—"blazed," "xanibars," "a blunt" and "robotripping"—really mean.
- Type the name of your teen's high school into the "search" bar of a popular teen social networking site and browse the profiles.

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IT'S 2007, NOT 1977

Congress is playing '70s-style energy politics. What about America's energy future?

The 1970s was a bad decade for fashion, hairstyles and, especially, energy policy.

So why are some in Congress playing '70s-style energy politics, pushing the kind of gasoline price controls and energy tax hikes that led to gasoline shortages, long lines at the pump and increased imports?

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the weekly Standard

Hillary Rodham Kerry

On October 2, 2003, Senator John Kerry voted for an $87 billion appropriation to fund U.S. military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan that was paired with rescinding some Bush tax cuts. It failed. Two weeks later, worried about Howard Dean's surging presidential campaign, Kerry joined only 11 other senators in voting against the $87 billion on final passage. Kerry later offered the immortal defense that he had voted for the $87 billion before voting against it.

On September 20, 2007, Senator Hillary Clinton voted for a convoluted Democratic resolution to condemn (without naming it) the ad in which MoveOn.org referred to the U.S. commander in Iraq as "General Betray Us," while also condemning attack ads from Max Cleland's 2002 Senate race and John Kerry's 2004 presidential run. (*Power Line*'s John Hinderaker noted: "So, in the Democrats' view, General Petraeus is just another politician and MoveOn's slander is just another campaign ad.") The measure failed to get the requisite 60 votes. Later that day, worried about the party's leftist activists, Clinton (along with 23 other Democrats) voted against the following resolution:

> To express the sense of the Senate that General David H. Petraeus, Commanding General, Multi-National Force-Iraq, deserves the full support of the Senate and strongly condemn personal attacks on the honor and integrity of General Petraeus and all members of the United States Armed Forces.

This isn't the first time Hillary Clinton has voted for General Petraeus before voting against him. She voted to confirm him for his fourth star and his new position on January 26, 2007, knowing that he would be executing a counterinsurgency strategy backed up by a surge of troops. Less than two months later, as the new strategy was just beginning to show results, she supported a motion to reverse course, begin to pull out troops, and abandon the new strategy.

Kerry's vote probably helped him overcome the Dean challenge in early 2004. It can't be an accident that Kerry and Edwards, two of the 12 senators who voted against the $87 billion on final passage, were the finalists in the Democratic race, while Joe Lieberman and Dick Gephardt, who voted for the $87 billion, got knocked out early. Perhaps Hillary Clinton is right to think that siding with MoveOn against General Petraeus will help her fend off the challenge of Barack Obama.

Or perhaps not. Obama refused to vote for or against the resolution condemning the MoveOn ad. He presented his refusal to vote as a principled stand against such a petty dispute: "The focus of the United States Senate should be on ending this war, not on criticizing newspaper advertisements." Obama continued, "By not casting a vote, I registered my protest against this empty politics."

Obama could afford to take this stand because he was against the war from the beginning. But Clinton has always been willing to do what it takes. In this instance it required silence in the face of MoveOn's slander of Petraeus. If one took the charges in the ad seriously, one would have to be in favor of relieving Petraeus of command. But Clinton has not called for that. She is not being serious about the war; she is trying to win the Democratic nomination. The Republican nominee in 2008 will be able to make the case that, as John McCain put it, "If you're not tough enough to repudiate a scurrilous, outrageous attack such as that, then I don't know how you're tough enough to be President of the United States."

On the other hand, the Republican nominee will have a lot better chance of winning the election if we're winning the war in Iraq. This is President Bush's task. It involves beating back irresponsible congressional moves to undercut the effort. That seems to have been accomplished for now. It also involves two other things. Bush needs to prevent others in his own administration—generals (and some civilian leaders) who have given up on the war, or who are jealous of Petraeus, or both—from undermining Petraeus's efforts and Bush's strategy in various subtle ways, which, judging from reports from within the Pentagon, is not a trivial danger. And second, Bush needs to succeed in preventing Iran and Syria from subverting our successes in Iraq. They cannot be allowed to serve as safe havens for the training and transporting of enemy fighters, or as providers of advanced weapons used against our soldiers in Iraq.

Hillary Clinton embarrassed herself last week, but Republicans shouldn't celebrate for too long. Their fundamental responsibility is to support the president's resolve to see this effort through. But it is also to insist that the president throw his whole administration's weight behind the winning strategy he has put in place. Clinton will try to do what it takes to get elected. Bush has to do what it takes to win the war.

—*William Kristol*

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Eric Cantor

Young G

The Republicans have an impressive group of young congressmen agitating for the party to return to its small-government roots—and to retake the House.

THE LEADER

Virginia's Eric Cantor has risen fast—and the sky's the limit.

BY FRED BARNES

A few weeks after Republican Eric Cantor of Virginia was elected to a second term in the House of Representatives in 2002, he got a phone call from Roy Blunt, the Republican whip and third-ranking member of the House leadership. Cantor figured his wish had come true and he was getting a seat on the House Ways and Means Committee. Before he ran for Congress, he helped run the family's real estate development firm in Richmond and his chief policy interest was in taxes and financial affairs, precisely what the committee deals with.

But Blunt had a different offer, one that would lift Cantor from obscurity as a Republican backbencher to a leadership position in the House. The job Blunt had in mind was chief deputy whip, the number four position in

Fred Barnes is executive editor of THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

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uns of the House GOP

the Republican chain of command. Cantor was stunned at the offer and said he'd have to consult his wife. But it was all but certain he'd say yes, he told Blunt. And he soon did.

Cantor, 44, is energetic, popular, and respected—the attributes necessary for congressional leadership. As well as he's done, Cantor could have climbed even further in the Republican hierarchy by now. Had he challenged Blunt for whip last fall, he probably would have won. Instead, by doing the honorable thing and aggressively supporting his mentor, Cantor guaranteed Blunt's reelection.

Cantor's ascent seems inevitable. He is likely to become the top Republican in the House—which means speaker, if Republicans regain control—when the current leaders, John Boehner and Blunt, step down. That is, if he stays in the House.

The retirement of Republican John Warner has created an open Senate seat in Virginia. Democrat Mark Warner, a well-liked ex-governor, is the favorite over either of the two likely Republican candidates, Northern Virginia congressman Tom Davis and former governor Jim Gilmore. The Warner camp is reported to have conducted a poll showing Cantor as Warner's strongest opponent and Republican officials have talked to him about running. Cantor says he has no intention of seeking the Senate seat, but he hasn't entirely ruled it out.

Should Cantor run, it would be an enormous loss to House Republicans. The party has an impressive group of young guns (members under 45) and, fortunately for Republicans, their ranks weren't depleted in the disastrous 2006 election. Of the group, Cantor is furthest along the leadership track. To use a sports analogy, he's the most valuable player.

Adam Putnam, 33, of Florida is another young gun on the rise. He's chairman of the Republican conference and a potential rival of Cantor for a top leadership post. But Putnam is the protégé of ex-Speaker Denny Hastert, who is retiring, and Cantor has the edge. Cantor, by the way, is the only Jewish Republican in the House.

> Had Cantor run for whip, he probably would have won. Roughly two-thirds of House Republicans indicated they'd support him.

In the leadership race last fall, Cantor's loyalty to Blunt was a matter of obligation. Cantor hadn't been the choice of then-Majority Leader Tom DeLay and Hastert when Blunt picked him as deputy whip in 2002. DeLay wanted Blunt to name Todd Tiahrt of Kansas. (Kay Granger of Texas and Mike Rogers of Michigan were also campaigning for the post.)

Soon after he got to Washington, Cantor had sought out Blunt and became a confidant and a member of the whip team. "Roy was a guy I could always turn to," Cantor says. He worked closely with Blunt's senior aides, Mildred Webber and Greg Hartley, who became admirers of Cantor. "He's so humble," says Webber. "He's not high and mighty. And he's a very good listener. He tries to put the members' interests first."

When DeLay resigned from Congress in spring 2006, Blunt and Boehner competed to replace him. Since Blunt had a good chance of winning, Cantor quickly sized up his chances to succeed him as whip. Roughly two-thirds of House Republicans indicated they'd support him. But Blunt lost to Boehner and stayed in the whip's job.

After Democrats captured the House last November, Hastert stepped down as Republican leader and both Boehner and Blunt faced challenges from disgruntled members. Cantor was pressured to run against Blunt. Several House Republicans, including Patrick McHenry of North Carolina and Devin Nunes of California, openly endorsed him. Even Boehner urged him to run, insisting that Cantor had no obligation to back Blunt. Cantor, however, felt he did. Boehner still would like to see Cantor as whip.

Cantor's interest in politics came from his father, Eddie, who'd grown up on the second floor of the family grocery store and built both a law practice and real estate firm in Richmond. Eddie Cantor was a close friend of Dick Obenshain, a Republican leader as the party grew rapidly in Virginia in the 1970s. The elder Cantor was treasurer of the Reagan campaign in Virginia in 1980.

As a freshman at George Washington University in 1981, Cantor worked as an intern for House Republican Tom Bliley of Virginia and was Bliley's driver in the 1982 campaign. After GW, Cantor got a law degree at William & Mary and a master's in real estate management from Columbia University. He met his wife, Diana, in New York, where she was working at Goldman Sachs.

She was a Democrat from Miami Beach and had lived in Greenwich Village for 10 years. Moving to Richmond was "a culture shock" for her, Cantor says. But she became a Republican and was appointed by Governor George Allen in 1996 to run the Virginia College Savings Plan.

Cantor spent eight years as a delegate in the Virginia legislature. Given his business background, he "gravitated toward the economic issues."

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In 2000, he ran to succeed Bliley in the House. With the endorsement of Bliley and the influential *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, Cantor was strongly favored to win the Republican nomination and the general election.

But late in the campaign, mysterious phone calls were made to Republican households noting that his chief opponent, Stephen Martin, was "the only Christian" in the race and that Cantor attended a synagogue. The Cantor campaign couldn't figure out the origin of the calls. Later it was discovered they were made by Faith and Family Alliance, a front group funded by lobbyist Jack Abramoff and run by two Virginia political consultants. Cantor won by only 263 votes, far less than expected. It was his only close election.

Cantor is a small-government conservative. "I don't think we came to Washington to fix everybody's problems," he says. He's a ferocious foe of tax hikes and has spearheaded opposition to raising the tax on so-called "carried interest" of hedge funds. He believes Republicans stumbled badly in recent years. "Our fiscal brand—we lost that," he says. "Sixty percent of America is with us in believing in a Main Street, common-sense conservatism." Yet Republicans often fail to connect with voters.

"We do a very poor job of selling our ideas," Cantor told me. "We've got to get better at connecting our solutions to the problems people face." Worse, many of their ideas are stale. "There's a tendency for those inside the Beltway to look at the established sources of ideas," chiefly the Washington think tanks, he argues. "I want to talk to people in the real world."

Cantor got one piece of advice from Bliley, his predecessor and the former chairman of the Commerce Committee. "Don't get on Commerce," Bliley said. "If you do, they'll hang that golden leaf on your head and you'll never get away from it." His point was, coming from Richmond, Cantor would be dubbed the tobacco industry's congressman and this would limit his advancement in the House.

He took that advice. Now, he's difficult to typecast as anything but a reform-minded conservative Republican with a lot of friends in the House and a bright future ahead of him. ♦

THE THINKER

Wisconsin's Paul Ryan has emerged as a major policy influence pushing for health care reform.

BY DUNCAN CURRIE

Like many other House Republicans, Wisconsin's Paul Ryan felt deeply torn over the 2003 Medicare prescription drug bill. He was loath to endorse a massive new entitlement program, given the already parlous future of U.S. retirement spending. But Ryan also viewed Health Savings Accounts (HSAs), the bill's most notable free-market element, as a vital means toward establishing "a beachhead against socialized medicine." Indeed, he had sent a letter to House conferees urging them to include HSAs in the final legislation. With an HSA-only bill impractical—Senate Democrats would have staged a filibuster—Ryan accepted the tradeoff and voted to approve the Medicare Modernization Act.

"I was very mixed," he says today. "I made my decision as I came to the floor." He ultimately "felt an obligation to support it, given that they answered my demand for HSAs." Nearly four years later, Ryan stands by that decision, noting that the new "Medicare Advantage" subsidies encourage seniors to get their benefits from private insurers. He also lauds tax-free HSAs as "one of the best things" the Republican Congress achieved in the last decade. "It's put us on offense on health care for the first time in 20 years."

Elected in 1998, Ryan, 37, is one of a small number of GOP House members with a passionate interest in revamping the U.S. health care system. A self-described "Dick Armey conservative," he regrets that the party has lost its "fiscal brand" through profligate spending and corruption. Shortly after the 2006 election, Ryan vaulted over a dozen Republicans with more seniority to become the ranking member on the Budget Committee. Known for his wonkishness and collegiality, he insists that restoring a "limited-government philosophy" is essential to regaining power and complains that "this notion of 'big government conservatism' is what got us in trouble."

But Ryan also recognizes that Republicans must not be complacent about spiraling medical costs. In April 2005, when he introduced legislation to provide health care tax breaks for small businesses and the uninsured, Ryan said the "skyrocketing" cost of insurance was "the biggest domestic crisis facing most Americans today. It affects our jobs, our economy, and our families' way of life. We have to get a handle on this problem." His aim is to forge a credible, coherent Republican alternative to the Democrats' vision of increased government control.

He emphasizes the need for market-based reform. "About a dozen of us care about this issue greatly," Ryan says of his GOP House colleagues, citing in particular Louisiana's Jim McCrery, the ranking Republican on the Ways and Means Committee, and Arizona's John Shadegg, who formerly chaired the Republican Policy Committee. With Democrats pushing hard for "universal coverage" and broader regulation of private insurance, more and more Republicans are realizing that, as former Bush adviser Karl Rove stressed in the *Wall Street Journal* last week, "This is a debate Republicans cannot avoid."

They may face an uphill battle. In late February, a *New York Times*/CBS

Duncan Currie is managing editor of the American.

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Paul Ryan

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News poll asked which of four domestic policies "is most important for the president and Congress to concentrate on right now." Whereas 55 percent of respondents said "making health insurance available to all Americans," only 11 percent said "reducing taxes." (Nineteen percent said "strengthening immigration laws" and 13 percent said "promoting traditional values.") When asked to choose between the two parties, 62 percent said the Democrats were "more likely to improve the health care system." Only 19 percent said the Republicans.

In that same poll, 90 percent of Americans said the system either requires "fundamental changes" (54 percent) or needs to be completely rebuilt (36 percent). Roughly as many people (89 percent) were either "very" (52 percent) or "somewhat" (37 percent) concerned about future health care costs. Seventy percent also considered it a "very serious" problem that millions of their countrymen lack health insurance. Most discouraging for market-oriented conservatives like Ryan were the 64 percent who agreed that "the federal government should guarantee health insurance for all Americans."

A self-described 'Dick Armey conservative,' Ryan regrets that Republicans have lost their 'fiscal brand.'

The popularity of the new Medicare prescription drug plan is also telling. As the *Washington Post* reported in late November, "Polls indicate that more than 80 percent of enrollees are satisfied, even though nearly half chose plans with no coverage in the doughnut hole, a gap that opens when a senior's drug costs reach $2,250 and closes when out-of-pocket expenses reach $3,600." The entitlement program "has proven cheaper and more popular than anyone imagined."

But are insured Americans really eager for Washington's role in managing the broader health industry to expand? Conservatives may take some solace from an ABC News/Kaiser Family Foundation/*USA Today* survey conducted in September 2006, which found that 88 percent of those already insured were satisfied with their coverage, and 89 percent of the insured were "satisfied with the quality of care they receive." Yet even among the insured, 60 percent were also "at least somewhat worried about being able to afford the cost of their health insurance over the next few years."

Ryan believes the debate is entering its pivotal stage, with health care spending now chewing up around 16 percent of GDP and Democrats proposing a shift toward government-directed care. "My focus is on getting consumer-driven health care," he says. The current employer-based system

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Kevin McCarthy

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insulates consumers against price volatility, but it also encourages them to rely on insurance for routine medical bills and to overuse employer-subsidized care, which drives up costs. By promoting this system, the tax code discriminates against those who buy their own private insurance. Ryan puts it bluntly: "The greatest source of health care inflation is the third-party payment system." It makes Americans more wary of switching jobs, lest they temporarily lose their insurance coverage (one of the middle-class anxieties that the Democrats campaigned on in 2006).

How should Republicans respond? Ryan touts two reforms in particular. The first one, prominently championed by Shadegg in the House and South Carolina Republican Jim DeMint in the Senate, would let Americans purchase their health insurance from out-of-state companies. Such competition could depress costs across the board. The other Ryan-backed reform would provide either tax credits or tax deductions for individuals and families who buy private health insurance themselves. President Bush embraced the tax-deduction formula in his 2007 State of the Union Address.

There's just one big problem: Neither of these reforms has traction in the current Democratic Congress. Any hope the Republicans had of ending the tax bias against people who buy their own health insurance died last November. The reforms outlined by Ryan will almost certainly require a GOP majority to pass and a Republican president to sign them into law. When one considers these reforms—supported by Rudy Giuliani and Mitt Romney—and then places them alongside the proposals of Hillary Clinton, Barack Obama, and John Edwards, it becomes even clearer that the 2008 election could be a seminal moment for American health care. As Ryan admits, the Democrats now "have a real chance at meeting their aspirations." ♦

THE STRATEGIST

California freshman Kevin McCarthy has only one goal: to retake the House.

BY SAMANTHA SAULT

Even before he was elected, Kevin McCarthy of Bakersfield, California, had made a name for himself among House Republicans. He was running for retiring Ways and Means chairman Bill Thomas's seat, and the campaign quickly raised over $1 million—most of which he didn't need to spend in a district that had voted

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68 percent for Bush in 2004. McCarthy instead spent his time and money campaigning for more than two-dozen Republican open-seat candidates.

"He helped just about everyone in our freshman class . . . showing up in our district, spending some time with us, as a friend and hopefully, at that time, a future colleague, and contributing to our campaign," says freshman Republican representative Jim Jordan of Ohio. Peter Roskam of Illinois concurs. "He had raised financial support for my campaign and delivered it to me personally," Roskam says. "It was not only helpful, but encouraging." Thirteen freshman Republicans were elected to the House in 2006—a year that was extremely unkind to the party—and all have a debt to McCarthy.

Born in Bakersfield in 1965, McCarthy opened his own business—Kevin O's Deli—at the age of 19 and after college earned an MBA. His political career began in 1987 when he worked as an unpaid intern in Bill Thomas's office. He stayed for 15 years, rising eventually to district director. In 2000, McCarthy was elected to the Kern County Community College District Board and, two years later, to the California Assembly. His mentor Thomas notes that McCarthy was quickly the Republican leader of the Assembly because he understood both campaigning and public service.

While Thomas handpicked McCarthy to succeed him, the two are extremely different politicians. While in Congress, Thomas was famed for his gruff and intimidating demeanor—he notoriously called the Capitol Police to remove obstreperous Democrats from a pension bill markup. In California, McCarthy was known for reaching across the statehouse aisle. Thomas believes that his successor will be essential to Republican efforts to regain the majority. He says McCarthy has "the ability to relate to people, to identify candidates, to encourage them to run, and to support them in getting successfully elected," and these traits are "absolutely essential to go from a minority to a majority." Thomas also admits his protégé is the better campaigner. McCarthy won the 2006 election with nearly 71 percent of the vote.

McCarthy was chosen to represent the incoming representatives on the Republican Steering Committee, which assigns members to committees. Jim Jordan says he supported McCarthy early for the position, because he "strikes you as the kind of guy who's got the energy and the intellect and the personality to be in a leadership position." Along with the Steering Committee, McCarthy serves on the Republican whip team.

McCarthy's top priority for Republicans is taking back the House in 2008. He believes that recent House floor battles, such as the fight over a Nancy Pelosi-instigated tax increase in the Farm Bill—historically a bipartisan piece of legislation—prove that the Democratic leadership is out of touch with most of the country. "They truly believe in the raising of taxes, and even if the committee works on a project and puts the legislation out and says 'no' to [tax increases], they will take over," he says, noting that Pelosi's philosophy is "fundamentally different" than that of the majority of Democrats and the rest of the country. He also recognizes that "you make a lot more policy when you have the majority."

> 'We need new ideas, creative ideas, and we shouldn't walk away from being conservative.'

McCarthy is a key member of the National Republican Congressional Committee (NRCC), which works to get Republicans elected. He coined the term "Time To Earn a Majority," and had the acronym TEAM engraved on congressional-seal watches he gave to NRCC colleagues. "Every time they look at what time it is," he says, "it's time to earn a majority."

McCarthy is the mastermind behind the NRCC's recent campaign against freshman Democrats, which includes radio and television ads and automated phone calls in close to 30 districts. The ads tie the representatives to Pelosi and call attention to their liberal voting records. McCarthy is confident that these freshmen will "be held more accountable for their votes" in upcoming elections.

He is optimistic about Republicans' prospects in 2008, but adamant that the party has a lot of work to do. "The important thing—and the thing I think Republicans lack—is ideas," he says. "We need new ideas, creative ideas, and we shouldn't walk away from being conservative." By "conservative," he means lowering taxes, expanding the free market, and creating greater accountability—and not just for Democrats. In particular, he wants lawmakers held accountable for their ever-increasing earmarks. He released his own earmarks in June and encouraged his colleagues to do the same.

McCarthy is an advocate of applying new technology to government to increase efficiency and get the public more involved. "Technology has changed every part of our lives, really, except government," he notes. Innovations like podcasts and Facebook, a social-networking website popular with 20-somethings, could be used to "spur ideas." The NRCC ad campaign includes an interactive website with a blog and YouTube links to the television ads.

California governor Arnold Schwarzenegger calls McCarthy "the future in Washington," and most of his Republican colleagues seem to agree. He's already considered a possible successor to NRCC chairman Tom Cole, who will step down in 2010. The *Sacramento Bee* and *Roll Call* have called him a "rising star." When asked his thoughts on being called such, he quipped, "Did you talk to my mom?"

McCarthy maintains that he isn't seeking a leadership position—but he hasn't ruled one out, either. "I'm trying to lay the groundwork where I can get the best information and be one of the best members here," he says. "Where that plays out, I don't know." ♦

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The Thompson Bounce

Fred stumbles, gains ground.

BY STEPHEN F. HAYES

David Holden is a savvy guy. He doesn't consider himself a political junkie, but he has been closely following the presidential campaign as it unfolds around him. Holden runs Hair Biz, a salon at 4 N. Main Street in Concord, New Hampshire. Hillary Clinton's campaign office is two blocks up, and his location, as luck would have it, puts him just a few doors down from John Edwards's headquarters.

Hair salon . . . John Edwards . . . Did I mention that Holden is a savvy guy?

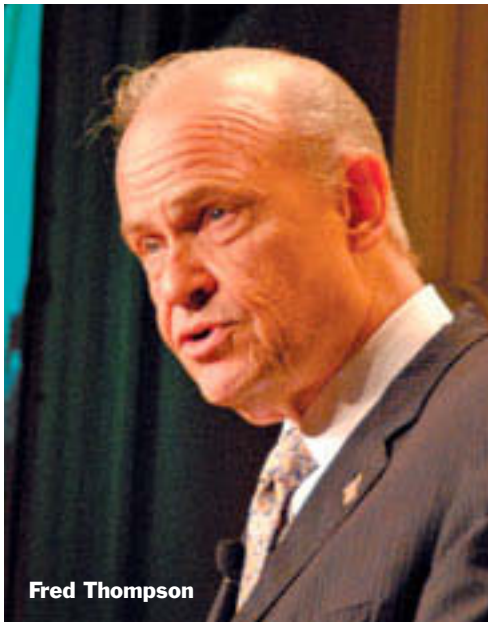
In June, Holden challenged 2008 presidential candidates to come to Hair Biz for a $400 haircut. The money would go towards research on autism—Holden's adopted son Costica suffers from the developmental disability.

I met Holden at his shop earlier this month as I chased a rumor that John McCain might show up for a trim. The rumors were unfounded, and McCain had his hair cut down the street for $16. Not one of the candidates has taken Holden up on the challenge. Still, he hasn't given up hope.

"I hear that Fred Thomas is getting in."

Fred Thomas. Fred Thompson. It doesn't matter, as long as he shows up for a haircut.

Even before he announced his candidacy September 5 on *The Tonight Show*, the Washington press corps was deeply skeptical about a Thompson run. The emerging conventional wisdom was that voters would judge harshly the turmoil and turnover that marked his pre-campaign efforts and that such trouble—a sure sign of more to come—would cripple his campaign. It was an understandable conclusion. After all, reporters in Washington had spent months covering Thompson's staff changes and fundraising woes. There had been real problems with his early efforts.



Fred Thompson

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But many voters, even the ones who live amidst the everyday swirl of early primary politicking, simply aren't paying much attention. A national Rasmussen poll conducted last week found that 56 percent of likely voters believe that the 2008 campaign has thus far been "annoying and a waste of time." And 72 percent would support measures to limit campaigning to the calendar year before Election Day.

Thompson has gotten additional media scrutiny since he announced, and the national press coverage of his first three weeks as a candidate has been even more negative than it was during what he calls "the preseason." George Will called the entry a "belly flop." *New York Times* columnist Gail Collins wrote: "When it comes to overhyped underperformers, Fred Thompson's entry into the presidential race was right up there with Britney Spears at the MTV awards." Ruth Marcus of the *Washington Post* complained: "Thompson's dialogue so far consists of folksy platitudes and broad pronouncements, unobjectionable yet unenlightening."

Thompson has been criticized for his choice of footwear, for losing too much weight, and for his lack of enthusiasm about meeting the Butter Princess at the Iowa State Fair. He has been chided for his failure to offer specifics on his plans for entitlement reform, the alternative minimum tax, and Iraq.

"I get the sense from the national press corps that our announcement tour would have been a failure unless Fred walked on water onto the stage where he levitated 10 feet in the air doing somersaults while delivering his remarks without notes," says Todd Harris, the campaign's communications director.

What explains this hostility? One factor is almost certainly Thompson's decision to work around—not through—the mainstream media in Washington. He first hinted at his candidacy in an interview with the Fox News Channel. He spent time with reporters from The Weekly Standard and *National Review*. He posted commentaries on conservative blogs and brief video editorials on his own website. Nothing generates hostility from reporters so much as ignoring or dismissing them. Just ask Dick Cheney.

But some of the criticisms are valid, and they do not come only from the national media. Lee Bandy,

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the influential columnist at the *State* in Columbia, South Carolina, wrote that Thompson's debut "wasn't very impressive" and that his upcoming debate performances could reveal that he is "not ready for prime time."

Even some Thompson supporters worry that his speeches lack focus and strike audiences as rhetorical wandering. And they are concerned that his long layoff from active campaigning and his late entry will mean that reporters will harp on him, playing his knock-the-dust-off stumbles as major campaign gaffes.

This week, Thompson intends to sharpen the differences he has with two of his rivals—Mitt Romney and Rudy Giuliani—by asking a simple question: Where were you during the 1994 Republican Revolution? Thompson, who first won election to the Senate that year, will portray himself as a "consistent conservative" who supported the small-government principles of the Contract With America then and supports them today. The obvious conclusion: While Thompson was campaigning as a proud conservative in Tennessee, Romney was running for the Senate in Massachusetts as a liberal Republican who distanced himself from Reaganomics. Giuliani was endorsing the Democratic governor of New York and liberal icon Mario Cuomo for reelection.

Perhaps the most interesting thing about the Thompson campaign so far is this: Despite his late entry, poor fundraising, and staff disorder, and despite the negative press, the former Tennessee senator, three weeks into his campaign, must be considered not only a top-tier candidate but almost a co-frontrunner for the Republican nomination. The Rasmussen poll at the end of last week actually found him tied with Giuliani; the most recent Gallup poll gives Giuliani an 8-point lead, Reuters/Zogby has Giuliani up 2, and CNN has the former mayor up one.

Call it a nice Fred Thomas post-announcement bump. ♦

The Fed's Recipe for Growth

Uncle Ben's wild rate cut.

BY IRWIN M. STELZER

One and done. That's what some commentators are saying about the decision of the Federal Reserve Board's monetary policy committee to cut the Fed funds rate by 50 basis points (half of a percentage point), twice what the market had been expecting. They reason that chairman Ben Bernanke had a choice between too much, too soon, and too little, too late—and chose the former. Both choices are not without risks. Cut rates and he might unleash inflation by stimulating an economy that is already growing at a reasonable pace. And he might create that bane of all central bankers, moral hazard, by bailing out improvident lenders and borrowers, emboldening them to repeat past errors, confident that the Fed will save their bacon every time.

But too little, too late also carried risks. Financial markets are, to put it mildly, nervous. Credit is not easy to come by; panicked depositors lined up last week in Britain to demand their money back from branches of Northern Rock; some mortgage-related institutions are already in or on the brink of bankruptcy; and next year's resetting of teasingly low initial mortgage rates threatens tens of thousands of homeowners with foreclosure. "The turbulence originated in concerns about subprime mortgages, but the resulting global financial losses have far exceeded even the most pessimistic estimates of the credit losses on these loans," Bernanke told Congress two days after reducing the Fed funds rate from 5.25 to 4.75 percent. Better to be a bit too generous, even with the attendant risks, if that's what it takes to forestall a possible cataclysm in financial markets. So holds Bernanke.

But the "one and done" crowd, which thinks Bernanke has headed off inflation by hinting he will not cut rates further, might be mistaken. First, Bernanke may not be done. If economic conditions deteriorate, last week's cut could be the first of several: Some forecasters think the Fed funds rate will fall to 4.0 percent by the first quarter of 2008, and to 3.5 percent by this time next year.

Second, it is not clear that the economy is so soft that it can absorb this stimulus without an increase in inflation. New data suggest that the jobs market is stronger than the earlier jobs reports led us to believe. Earnings remain relatively good, even at the troubled investment banks—Goldman Sachs stunned analysts by reporting robust revenues and profits for the last quarter. Retail sales are not what shopkeepers would like (are they ever?), but back-to-school and luxury goods have moved smartly off the shelves. Exports are rising at an annual rate of about 15 percent. Oil and other commodity prices are rising, as are labor costs.

All of this has added to fears that Bernanke, who once joked that the way to end a recession is to drop money from helicopters, has won instant popularity at the price of future inflation. No less an authority than Alan Greenspan, while careful to say that he "would be hard-pressed to see what I would have done differently," warns that because productivity is not

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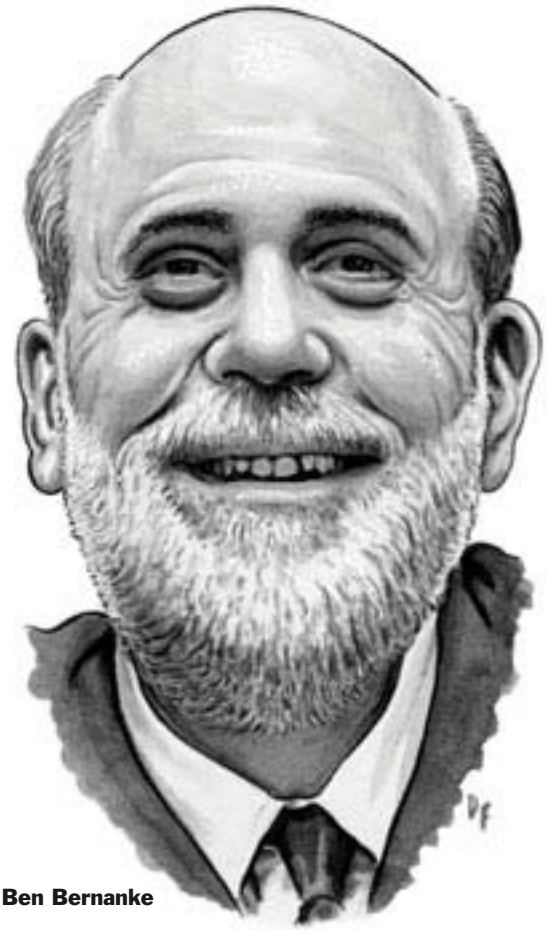
likely to increase very rapidly, and the price-dampening effect of globalization has played itself out in part, inflationary pressures are on the rise.

The markets are indeed worried. The dollar's drop is accelerating so rapidly that it has fallen to par with the traditionally forlorn Canadian dollar for the first time since the 1970s. Long-term interest rates are up, as investors fear that the value of their investments will be eroded by inflation. That's the verdict of the bond market, the institution that Clinton adviser James Carville held in such awe that he famously cried, "When I come back I want to come back as the bond market, because then you can intimidate everybody." Not Bernanke, who remains calm in the face of rising long-term interest rates. The inflation genie might still be bottled up, but the Fed chairman has fearlessly loosened the cap.



Ben Bernanke

No matter. Applause for Bernanke reverberates in the halls of Congress, the boardrooms of America, and on the floors of the world's exchanges. "The Fed chairman has demonstrated very important economic leadership," Jim O'Neill, Goldman Sachs's head of global economic research, told the firm's clients last week.

So far, Bernanke's luck has held. Shortly after he cut rates, the government reported that consumer prices fell in August: so much for inflation fears. Housing starts dropped to 42 percent below their January 2006 peak, a 12-year low, and the National Retail Federation is predicting a less than jolly Christmas selling season: so much for fears of an overheating economy.

Most important to Bernanke's new legion of fans, stock prices have rebounded, and credit markets are beginning to function more normally. Corporate borrowers suddenly find capital markets open to them. Lehman Brothers Holdings and General Electric immediately issued bonds, and R.H. Donnelley sold more than $1 billion in junk bonds, the first such sale since the credit crunch hit in the summer. Deal-makers emerged from their funk as the prospects for financing the backlog of transactions improved, although on terms less favorable than in the good old pre-credit-crunch days. After "a quiet period in new transactions through the first quarter of 2008," Goldman Sachs's head of merchant banking, Rich Friedman, is advising his clients, deals will pick up, but they will be smaller and less wildly remunerative.

> In cutting the Fed funds rate by 50 basis points, Fed chairman Ben Bernanke had a choice between too much, too soon, and too little, too late—and chose the former.

Lessons have been, or should have been, learned:

¶ Bernanke might have created some moral hazard by seeming to bail out financial institutions that behaved badly, but lenders are unlikely to throw money at the penurious homeless or firms dependent on that group. Bankers have famously short memories, though, so some review of institutional regulation is probably in order.

¶ Pragmatic activism trumps academic dithering. Ben Bernanke's hero status contrasts sharply with that of Mervyn King, governor of the Bank of England. He admirably held to his anti-moral-hazard, hands-off policy. Panic ensued, and the British government was forced to stem a bank run by guaranteeing bank deposits. Talk now centers on when, not whether, King will be forced to resign. The contrast between Bernanke's popularity and King's likely fate will not be lost on central bankers.

¶ Ideology is a poor guide to policy during periods of financial difficulty. The Bush administration resisted efforts to expand significantly the ability of various agencies to ease conditions in mortgage markets, but has had to beat a partial retreat in the face of criticism from Democrats in Congress.

¶ Most financial institutions in America are in good shape, with strong balance sheets. The recent period of illiquidity had its impact, to be sure, but no major bank was threatened with destruction.

When all is said and done, we are once again reminded of the wisdom of Walter Bagehot, who noted during the monetary crisis of 1857 that "panics will occur every now and then. . . . In America . . . we cannot reasonably anticipate anything but an occasional repetition." Bernanke has no reason to fear boredom once the current crisis has passed. ♦

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Two Aspirin and Call Us in 2008

The GOP health care consensus.

BY YUVAL LEVIN

The 2008 presidential campaign has seen the Democrats more outspoken on health care than they have been since the early 1990s. The three frontrunners have produced health care proposals that would greatly increase the role of the government in funding and managing the nation's health insurance system, and all constantly speak about health care on the stump.

An aggressive approach would seem to make political sense. Americans are clearly concerned about the cost of health care—often listing it just behind the war in Iraq among their worries—as well as the instability of coverage and the plight of the uninsured. But when pollsters begin to dig into these worries, what they turn up is not quite what the Democrats are hoping.

To begin with, those Americans who *are* insured—which, of course, includes the vast majority of voters—are very happy with their coverage and care. Almost 90 percent of them rated their coverage good or excellent in last year's Kaiser Foundation poll on health care, the highest rating in the two decades Kaiser has been polling. In the same poll, 93 percent were happy with their quality of care, 86 percent with their ability to get a doctor's appointment when they want to, and 77 percent with their ability to get non-emergency care without having to wait. A surprisingly high 64 percent even said they were satisfied with their health care costs. These are not voters clamoring for radical change in their health care.

Americans are also not eager to see a more intrusive federal role in health insurance. In early September, Senate Republicans were briefed on the results of recent polling of women and swing voters in key 2008 states which showed that "government-run health care" was a very powerful turn-off for these crucial constituencies. More recent surveys turn up the same result: Voters are anxious about health care, but the prospect of a new bureaucracy to manage their care worries them, too.

> Hillary Clinton was notably defensive announcing her plan. 'This is not government-run,' she said. 'There will be no new bureaucracy.'

What troubles them about the current system is the inherent instability of employment-based health insurance, which links changes in jobs to changes in health coverage. Rising costs, moreover, mean that those just barely holding on to coverage must constantly worry about losing it. Add in the fact that tens of millions of Americans are without insurance, and you have a real desire for action.

But the Democrats' approach to health care, which would essentially dismantle our existing insurance system and replace it with a new one with the government at its center, is a grossly excessive response to these concerns. The candidates' plans would seriously undermine what the vast majority of Americans appreciate about their health care and would introduce new sources of concern. The Democrats made this mistake in 1993, and Republicans were able to crush HillaryCare by just pointing to its profound flaws. In 2007 voters have more serious concerns about health care (and recognize the genuine problems of the uninsured); Republicans will need something to counter with.

Rather surprisingly, though, the Republicans may be prepared. In recent months, without fanfare, a Republican health care consensus has emerged. It is backed by the administration, which introduced a series of proposals in a low-key presidential speech in June. It has the support of Republican leaders in Congress, who have taken to speaking more about health care this summer. And in one form or another it has made it into the stump speech of the leading presidential contenders. The approach consists of three parts: reform of the way health insurance is taxed, more control for consumers in how health care dollars are spent, and more flexibility for states to use Medicaid funds to help the uninsured. Each of these pieces is larger than it seems.

Tax law is the principal shaper of America's health care-insurance system, because money spent by employers on health insurance (unlike money spent on salary or other benefits) is not taxed, which creates an enormous incentive to pay for health coverage through our employers. Republicans from George W. Bush to Rudy Giuliani to Mitt Romney have proposed creating a standard health care deduction (or tax credit), which would make it equally sensible for individuals to buy their own insurance as it is to get it through work. An individual insurance policy would stay with you if you changed jobs, and such a market would make it cheaper for small-business workers and the self-employed (a significant portion of the uninsured) to afford coverage.

Individually purchased health care coverage would also create more cost-conscious consumers. Galloping

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growth in health care costs is a major source of the public's anxiety about coverage. The Bush administration has begun to use the lever of Medicare payments to force physicians and hospitals to make prices publicly known, and Republicans in Congress and on the campaign trail have pushed for greater openness about costs too. Together with the long-standing campaign for Health Savings Accounts, this begins to point the way toward a more consumer-driven health care market. Health care is not quite like any other commodity (nor should it be), but it can be subjected to some market pressures to control costs and empower patients.

Finally, Republicans have also proposed allowing states more latitude in using Medicaid dollars that now pay for "uncompensated care" (which mostly covers care for the uninsured who do not directly qualify for Medicare) to provide subsidies for the uninsured to help them buy their own private coverage. As governor of Massachusetts, Mitt Romney used such an approach. But rather than a national version of his state's plan, in August Romney proposed giving each state the ability to design its own approach to the problem. (In the same speech, he also lined up behind a tax reform proposal and consumer-driven health care.) The Massachusetts model, he suggested, could help other states. But for the federal government, his preferred solution is much like Bush's and, by all indications so far, like those of all the prominent Republican presidential candidates. It is the new GOP health care consensus.

This mix of proposals is not without its own problems. Medicaid flexibility, for instance, has tended to encourage state irresponsibility with federal dollars in the past. And consumer-driven health care, if carried too far too fast, can increase the anxiety of families by forcing them to make unfamiliar choices. But on the whole, Republicans have put forward serious yet modest proposals that address voters' concerns about the stability and portability of their insurance coverage and help the uninsured while keeping in place a private insurance system that works quite well for the great majority of Americans.

The overreaching of the Democrats may hand Republicans an unexpected opportunity on health care reform. Both parties are seeking to address the concerns of the middle class and uninsured, but the Republican approach builds on what most middle-class voters like about the current system (its relative freedom, lack of waiting, and decent quality), while the Democratic approach builds on what they don't like (bureaucracy and loss of control over health decisions).

Some Democrats are clearly aware of their vulnerability. In rolling out her health care proposal last week, Hillary Clinton was notably defensive. "This is not government-run," she said in her two speeches announcing the plan. "There will be no new bureaucracy." But her plan calls for a new federal individual health insurance mandate (which will require an entirely new national regulatory structure for coverage) and includes a new public government-run insurance program on its menu of coverage options. It points precisely to bureaucracy and government-run health insurance. The lady doth protest too much.

A savvy Republican candidate would talk about two sets of health care problems: The first are the problems of the system we have, and the second are the prospects of centralized, bureaucratic, government-managed health care, which the Democrats support—slowly dismantling our health care system and replacing it with a huge bureaucracy from the people who brought you the post office and the DMV.

The new Republican approach to health care would address both problems through targeted reforms that control costs, give more people access to private insurance, improve the stability and portability of coverage, and increasingly put insurance decisions in the hands of individuals and families, where they belong. This is the platform the Republicans have long needed. ♦

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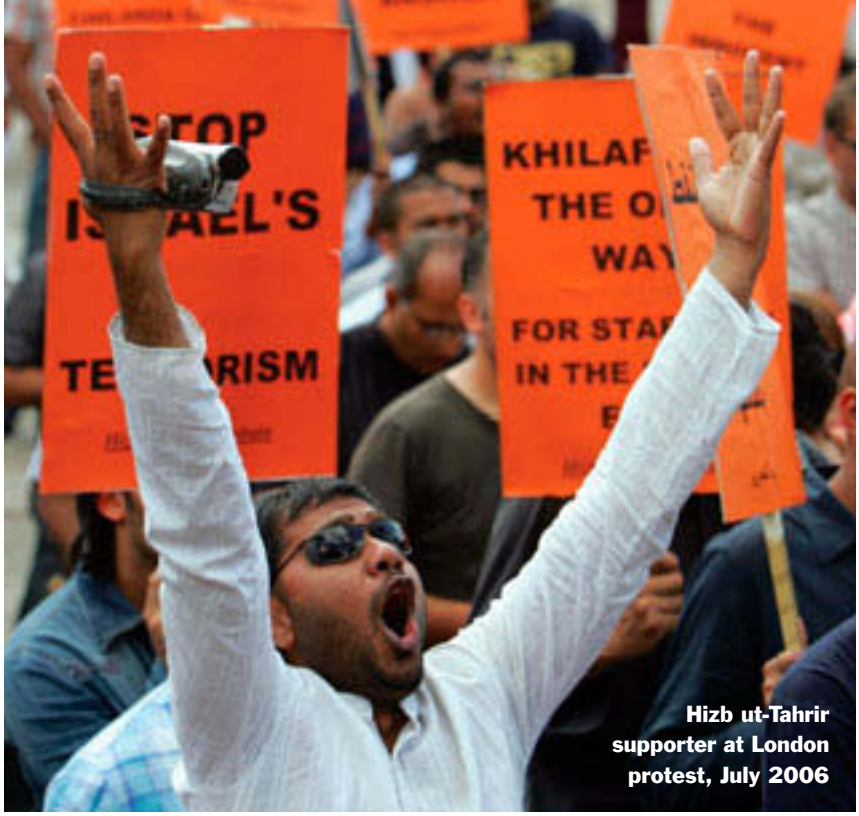

Hizb ut-Tahrir supporter at London protest, July 2006

ODD ANDERSEN / AFP / GETTY IMAGES

The Bad Guys You Don't Know

Meet Hizb ut-Tahrir.

BY OLIVIER GUITTA

While al Qaeda and the Muslim Brotherhood have become household names, another Sunni Islamist group of nearly equal importance—Hizb ut-Tahrir (HT), or the Islamic Liberation party—remains little known in the United States. That may be changing. HT's activities in places as far-flung as Britain, Germany, Indonesia, and the Palestinian territories have been cropping up in the news, and HT has lately entered the social networks of cyberspace, posting propaganda videos on YouTube to troll for recruits to its campaign for uniting Muslims worldwide in a new caliphate.

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One of HT's goals is to destroy Israel and "liberate Palestine from occupation, racism and impurity by going back to the strict practice of a true Islam." In August, an HT rally in the West Bank city of Ramallah drew some 10,000 people under the banner "The caliphate, a force for the future." Although the man who founded HT in 1953 in Jerusalem, Sheikh Taqiuddin al-Nabhani, was a Palestinian—a *qadi* (Muslim judge) and an ex-Muslim Brother seeking a more radical alternative to the Brotherhood—HT was until recently an insignificant player in Palestinian politics. Not anymore. A Palestinian civil servant and HT adherent recently told the French daily *Libération*:

> This year, thousands of Palestinians have joined our ranks, especially youngsters. They have had enough of democracy and its corruption, the Palestinian Authority infidels, and the fighting between Fatah and Hamas. They want the caliphate.

Although HT has no militia of its own and refrains from calling for armed struggle, it could always develop a military wing. Already, the sudden rise in the group's popularity, coupled with allegations of financing from Saudi princes, has become a source of concern for Hamas, Fatah, and the Israeli Shin Bet (the internal security service).

Indonesia is another place where HT is gaining popularity. On August 12, 100,000 people attended an HT meeting at the Bung Karno stadium in Jakarta to promote the idea of reestablishing the caliphate. The crowd chanted "*Khalifah*, *Khilahah*" ("Caliphate, creation" in Arabic) under a banner reading, "The Islamic caliphate rules the world." Back in 2000, HT's first Indonesian conference on this theme drew only a few thousand people.

In an interview published on August 18, Muhammad Ismail Yusanto, the leader of HT Indonesia, told *Libération*, "Capitalism is the worst system. It makes Muslims and non-Muslims alike suffer. To negotiate with global capitalism, you need to oppose to it another global system: the Islamic caliphate." To Yusanto the solution to the evils that accompany "Western influence and modernity" is simple: Impose *sharia* (Islamic law) on the country.

Like many Islamists, those of HT are busily using new technologies to spread their propaganda. A quite professional 45-minute video produced by HT Malaysia was recently posted on YouTube under the title "Oh Muslims—How Much Longer Can We Wait?" Although ostensibly historical, it is full of pseudo-facts. One heading, for instance, says, "2000: 'Israel' engages in the use of chemical weaponry" (note the scare quotes around Israel). Mainly, the video displays an endless succession of gory images of Muslim children killed or mutilated all over

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the globe. At one point, a Pakistani HT militant vows: "Until *Khalifah* returns, we will sacrifice our lives, our property and everything else." Another speaker states: "We say to the USA the flesh of the Muslims is not soft. . . . USA should know that what it has experienced in Falluja is the beginning of the end of its throne, tyranny, oppression, corruption and megalomania!" Even without an explicit summons to terrorism, the relentless violence of the images is incendiary, and suggestive messages such as "Oh armies of the Muslims, we wait for your help" abound.

In a recent *Jamestown Terrorism Monitor*, intelligence analyst Madeleine Gruen discussed the niche HT America (HTA) has carved out for itself:

> The younger generation's pioneering spirit has made HTA one of the most innovative extremist groups in terms of its use of new media as a means of marketing its ideology. Some of their marketing schemes have included hip hop fashion boutiques, hip hop bands, use of online social networks, use of video sharing networks, chat forums and blogs.

Gruen warned that "HTA likely plays an important role in the global HT network due to its success in the new media arena and its access to international students, who study at American universities for several years before they return to their home countries."

Founded in 1953, Hizb ut-Tahrir has become 'the vanguard of the radical Islamist ideology that encourages its followers to commit terrorist acts.'

How worried should the West be about the expansion of this not directly violent group, yet whose alumni include al Qaeda's notorious Khalid Sheikh Mohammed and Abu Musab al Zarqawi? Very worried, argues Maajid Nawaz, a former leader and recruiter for HT in Britain, the organization's headquarters. As Nawaz explained this month to the *New York Times*, "Hizb ut-Tahrir spearheaded the radicalization of the 1990s and cultivated an atmosphere of anger. . . . Buried in the literature is an ideology that inevitably leads to violence." Hudson Institute scholar Zeyno Baran put it best: "While HT as an organization does not engage in terrorist activities, it has become the vanguard of the radical Islamist ideology that encourages its followers to commit terrorist acts. . . . HT today serves as a *de facto* conveyor belt for terrorists."

In 2003, Germany joined most Middle Eastern countries in banning HT. But Germany, unlike the United States, outlaws hate speech and has no First Amendment. In the United States, as in Britain, HT has so far not met the criteria for banning as a terrorist group. Clearly, though, as it grows in numbers and in its presence on the web, it is pressing hard against the boundaries of what a free society can tolerate. ♦

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Get a (Second) Life!

The Avatars Are Coming

By Jonathan V. Last

Chicago

The online computer game Second Life has garnered more attention in the last 24 months than any other bit of technology. Heralded everywhere from the *Wall Street Journal* to the *Hollywood Reporter* to *Scientific American*, it has been variously proclaimed a revolutionary communication tool, the future of the Internet, the next great business frontier, and a giant, looming social hub that will make MySpace and Facebook obsolete. One technology research group predicts that by 2011, 80 percent of Internet users will be in Second Life or something like it.

What is Second Life? Technically, it is a Massively Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Game (MMORPG), the geek term for an Internet portal where large numbers of people interact in a virtual world. But during the last couple of years observers have begun debating whether it is a game at all, or rather something different, a new kind of virtual space. What is certain is that millions of people have signed up for Second Life. Almost 900 of them—up from 450 last year—gathered in late August at a hotel by Lake Michigan

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A character in the virtual online world Second Life

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Every facet of an avatar's appearance can be customized. Shops throughout the Second Life world sell clothing, accessories, even new hair styles so that you can impress at the latest dance club.

for the third annual Second Life Community Convention. They came from across the country as well as from France, Germany, the United Kingdom, Australia, and Japan, and from all walks of life. One of them, an attractive older woman named "LaraZ Allen," is a former college professor who was at loose ends after retirement. Then she found Second Life and began playing for roughly six hours a day. The longest she has ever gone at a stretch is 12 straight hours. "It takes the place of work," she says.

Second Life was developed in 2003 by the San Francisco tech company Linden Lab. Players (Linden Lab calls them "residents") download a program to their computer that allows them to log into Second Life and create a character they control, an avatar. They customize the avatar's physical appearance, making it look like anything from an Asian woman to a white man to a giant animal resembling a college football mascot. And then they appear in the Second Life world.

This world looks like a cartoon rendering of the real world, or, more accurately, a cartoon rendering of Malibu. The real world infrastructure of Second Life is a farm of computer servers. Each hosts a small virtual region, which is rendered as a 65,536 square meter island. These islands feature animated beaches and waterfalls, shopping malls and dance clubs, houses and office buildings. Altogether they form a vast archipelago (which is itself subdivided into three minicontinents). If the virtual land inside Second Life were made real today, there would be 780 square kilometers of it, more than a fourth of the size of Rhode Island. All of this land belongs to the residents. Linden Lab sells it to them; an island costs $1,675 and then $295 a month in maintenance fees. (Linden Lab has gone far in guaranteeing residents real property rights. Unlike most MMORPGs, Second Life allows residents to own the virtual space and the objects within it.) Once you buy your island, you can develop and use it however you wish: Some residents have even created scale versions of downtown Dublin and Amsterdam.

Inside Second Life, avatars move by walking, flying, driving virtual cars, or simply teleporting. As to the question of what Second Life residents *do*, well, they do what any normal person does in RL (Second Life slang for "real life"): They go to dance clubs and socialize. They perform charity work—last June residents raised $75,000 for the RL American Cancer Society by holding a virtual walk-a-thon, where, using their keyboards, they directed their avatars in tiny loops around a virtual track. They take SL jobs, and they earn and spend money. The currency used in Second Life is called the Linden Dollar, and it trades in real world markets for about 265 Lindens on the U.S. dollar. Today there are nearly $3.4 billion Lindens in circulation, meaning that Second Life residents are spending a lot of real money on their virtual world, buying pretend clothes, pretend cars, pretend houses, pretend sex. (It should be noted that sex—yes, sex acts between animated characters controlled by RL humans at keyboards—takes up approximately as much space in Second Life as pornography does on the Internet.)

And doing all of this buying and selling are 9.6 million residents. This number, however, is somewhat slippery. It is the number of avatars that have been created since Second Life first launched. A better number, "unique residents" (meaning actual people, who may have multiple avatars) is closer to 5.7 million. An even better number, residents logged in during the last 30 days, is just under 800,000.

But it is that eye-popping 9.6 million that has attracted the attention of mainstream America. Because of it, schools,

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businesses, nonprofit groups, and other organizations have come running to Second Life, eager to be part of the future.

The typical RL newspaper story about SL is some variation of "Look Who's Joined Second Life." Over the months, that blank has been filled by an increasingly odd coterie of groups: Microsoft, H&R Block, NASA, NOAA, Santa Clara University, the Swedish Embassy. Harvard Law School professor Charles Nesson taught a class last year inside SL. In June, the MacArthur Foundation announced that it had given $550,000 to the University of Southern California for the express purpose of staging events in Second Life. Jonathan Fanton, the foundation's president, has his own avatar: "Jonathan MacFound."

Corporate America has stampeded into Second Life. Companies—ranging from the NBA and Sun Microsystems to Nissan and Reuters—have set up their own elaborate islands. Coldwell Banker, for instance, has an in-world headquarters where they rent virtual houses. Some companies have been more imaginative in their approach. When the Starwood hotel group was planning a new chain, Aloft, they created a virtual prototype and solicited advice from residents, using Second Life as an elaborate focus group.

IBM has a massive, in-world corporate headquarters which spreads over multiple islands. *Fortune* reported in January that 3,000 IBM employees had created avatars (including CEO Sam Palmisano) and that 300 of them were "routinely conducting company business" inside Second Life.

It's unclear what that business is. In fact, it's unclear why any of these corporations are in Second Life, other than to be able to say they are in Second Life. The temp agency Manpower bought an island in July. Their press release is indicative of the thinking behind such forays:

> Manpower Island is a place where job seekers, employers and entrepreneurs can come together in an interactive forum to learn about and explore the World of Virtual Work, share ideas and identify new opportunities in traditional and non-traditional meeting spaces ranging from an amphitheater to a relaxing spot on the virtual beach.

At the convention in Chicago, a spokesman from Coca-Cola attempted to justify the company's huge Second Life "Virtual Thirst" campaign, whose curious motto is, "We believe that even avatars get thirsty." In the course of explaining Coke's SL experience, he claimed that "it certainly wasn't about selling cans of soda" before adding, just a few seconds later, that "when it comes down to it, this is about selling product."

This confusion hardly matters. A cottage industry of SL developers has sprung up to happily accept the money corporations are eager to spend shaping their islands and building their virtual headquarters. Sibley Verbeck is CEO of the Electric Sheep Company (wittily named for the Philip K. Dick novel about androids), the most successful of these design firms. His company employs 50 RL people, who work almost entirely inside Second Life. As Verbeck told *Wired* magazine recently, "We have basically not made any sales calls. We would like to. But we can hardly keep up with the Fortune 500 companies that are contacting us."

Yet these businesses seem to be chasing ghosts. As the *Wired* story noted, in June the most popular location in Second Life was Money Island, which gives away Linden dollars to people taking surveys. It had a visitation index of 136,000 (the higher the score, the more heavily visited the SL destination). An adult property, Sexy Beach, scored 133,000. The Sears store in IBM's vast complex scored 281. Coca-Cola's Virtual Thirst pavilions scored 27. That's not an anomaly. On a random day in August, 5 of the top 15 destinations were adult islands and four were "free money" islands. None was a corporate property, few of which even managed a score above 2,000.

So who *is* playing Second Life? Most of the time, walking around Second Life is like touring Las Vegas after the rapture. At any given moment, only 30,000 to 45,000 residents are logged on. Spread out over 700 square kilometers, that gives the SL world a population density close to South Carolina's. There are lots of modern, glass buildings and tree-filled parks. There are beaches everywhere you turn. But mostly the world is deserted. When you do find people, they're young and beautiful. There are no old folks in Second Life; no fat people, either. The typical SL gathering looks something

Players customize the avatar's physical appearance, making it look like anything from an Asian woman to a white man to a giant animal resembling a college football mascot. And then they appear in the Second Life world.

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like an Abercrombie & Fitch ad, only with extra fetish gear.

When I first arrived at registration for the convention in Chicago, there were about 70 young, hip, multiethnic twenty-somethings, all smartly dressed, standing in line. For a moment I was shocked at how much SLers looked like their avatars. It turned out I was in the wrong place—this was the registration for a local graduate school's open house. The SL crowd was somewhat different. There were a handful of Asians and perhaps a dozen African Americans; the rest of the 900 or so convention goers were white. There were nearly as many women as men, and the average age appeared to be early- to mid-40s. There looked to be more people in their 50s than in their 20s. And without delving too much into matters of body mass index, there was very little physiological correlation with the average avatar. On the whole, the gathering looked not unlike a Howard Dean rally, circa 2003.

Metaverse enthusiasts predict that Second Life—or something like it—will replace the web browser as the way we interface with the Internet. A case can be made that Second Life's nearest metaverse competitor might actually be Google Earth.

It is impossible to get perfect data on residents because avatars are never deleted, even if they have been abandoned by players who have left the game. What we do know is this:

¶ Linden Lab reports that the number of unique residents as of July 2007 was 5.7 million; roughly 75 percent are male and 25 percent are female (in the RL, that is).

¶ Fewer than 475,000 residents have logged onto Second Life in the last two weeks.

¶ 18- to 24-year-old users make up 26 percent of Second Lifers; 25- to 34-year-olds are 38 percent; 35- to 44-year-olds are 22 percent; and 45 and above are 12 percent.

¶ The older age groups leave a disproportionate footprint, with the 35-and-overs accounting for 45 percent of the hours spent in Second Life.

This seems a much smaller and older pool of people than one might expect. Part of this, of course, is the appeal of Second Life—it lets you be something other than who you really are. For instance, LaraZ, the retired professor, started out in SL by entering her avatar in a modeling contest for a virtual fashion designer. She won, and now she spends her days working for the designer (no longer as a model, but as an in-world event planner).

Others have found second careers, too. Linden Lab's metrics show that in August, 42,691 users had positive SL income. The vast majority made less than $50. But in each of the last four months, over 1,600 users have earned between $200 and $500; just over 100 users have pulled in more than $5,000 per month.

The most famous of these is "Anshe Chung." She is the avatar of a German woman named Ailin Graef. A Chinese-born language teacher, Graef began working in Second Life as an escort. She invested the Lindens she made in virtual real estate: buying islands, developing them, and then renting out the space. Graef made news in 2006 when she announced that her SL land and cash holdings exceeded $1 million. *BusinessWeek* put her—or rather her Anshe Chung avatar—on their cover.

Graef later incorporated her business as Anshe Chung Studios. The government of China accorded the company special status as a high-tech enterprise, and it established its corporate headquarters in Hubei. Anshe Chung Studios now employs 60 workers who spend their time developing land inside Second Life. (Graef is such a big wheel in the SL universe that when the Linden market dipped, she threatened to create her own currency. She probably has the ability to destroy the SL economy if she were to flood the market with Lindens or land.)

You can see why reporters and corporate honchos and foundation presidents get excited: Second Life looks and feels like the future. Linden Lab CEO Philip Rosedale doesn't undersell this point. Rosedale, a 39-year-old, blond, good-looking former physics major from U.C. San Diego, is an alpha-nerd, a little like Val Kilmer's character from the 1985 classic *Real Genius*. In 2006, Rosedale told *Wired*, "I'm not building a game. I'm building a new country." At the Chicago convention he was only slightly less expansive. People "don't appreciate sometimes how big this thing is going to become," he said. "This is something that everybody on earth is going to use. … [Second Life] is bigger than the web."

It's possible that Rosedale is both right and wrong. The inescapable problem with Second Life's theory of inevitability is the fact that the vast majority of people who try SL walk away from it. *Wired* reports that 85 percent of the avatars which have been created have been

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abandoned. At the conference, Sibley Verbeck claimed that the number was 90 percent and stated flatly that the platform won't be successful if this ratio persists. It's difficult to think of a world-changing innovation that was discarded by 90 percent of its early adopters.

But SL is the first successful manifestation of an idea known among futurists as the "metaverse." The metaverse concept—a virtual world inhabited by real people—was pioneered in science fiction novels, notably William Gibson's 1984 *Neuromancer* and Neal Stephenson's 1992 *Snow Crash*. The first intellectual treatment of the metaverse came in the form of David Gelernter's 1992 book *Mirror Worlds*. Here is Gelernter describing it: "The software model of your city, once it's set up, will be available (like a public park) to however many people are interested. . . . Each visitor will zoom in and pan around and roam through the model as he chooses." His mirror world is a nearly perfect description of SL.

Metaverse enthusiasts predict that Second Life—or something like it—will replace the web browser as the way we interface with the Internet. (A thoughtful essay in *MIT Technology Review* makes the case that Second Life's nearest metaverse competitor might actually be Google Earth.) Perhaps. The more pressing question is whether or not the metaverse will compete with the real one. Rosedale believes it will. "There will be a tipping point where Second Life starts taking time away" from real life and the normal Internet, he told the residents in Chicago.

His keynote address to the SLCC, like the rest of the conference, was simulcast into the virtual world. (At one point, I sat in a room in Chicago listening to a panel while, on my laptop, my avatar sat in a park inside Second Life listening to the same audiostream.) It makes you wonder why, if these people believe so deeply in the metaverse, they needed to come to Chicago at all.

Shopping is a major activity in Second Life with a wide variety of products available if you have Linden dollars. Development continues apace on islands throughout the archipelago.

The metaverse has its temptations. People don't grow old in Second Life; they're always young and thin and fabulous. Death, literally, does not exist. In Second Life an avatar doesn't disappear from the records just because the resident who owned it has died. Perhaps the most curious practice to emerge in Second Life is the establishment of virtual memorials for dead friends. The SLCC program featured short tributes to the departed, many of which gave coordinates for the little pretend monuments erected to them. In memory of an avatar known as "tr0n Rich," one resident wrote, "Tr0n, you have touched my heart incredibly. I had grown to love you in a way I have never known. You were a very loved man and partner. You may be gone from RL but you will never be forgotten."

"Gone from RL" may be the most inadequate euphemism ever offered for the mortal condition. But its clumsiness hints at why first life will always be more important than Second. ♦

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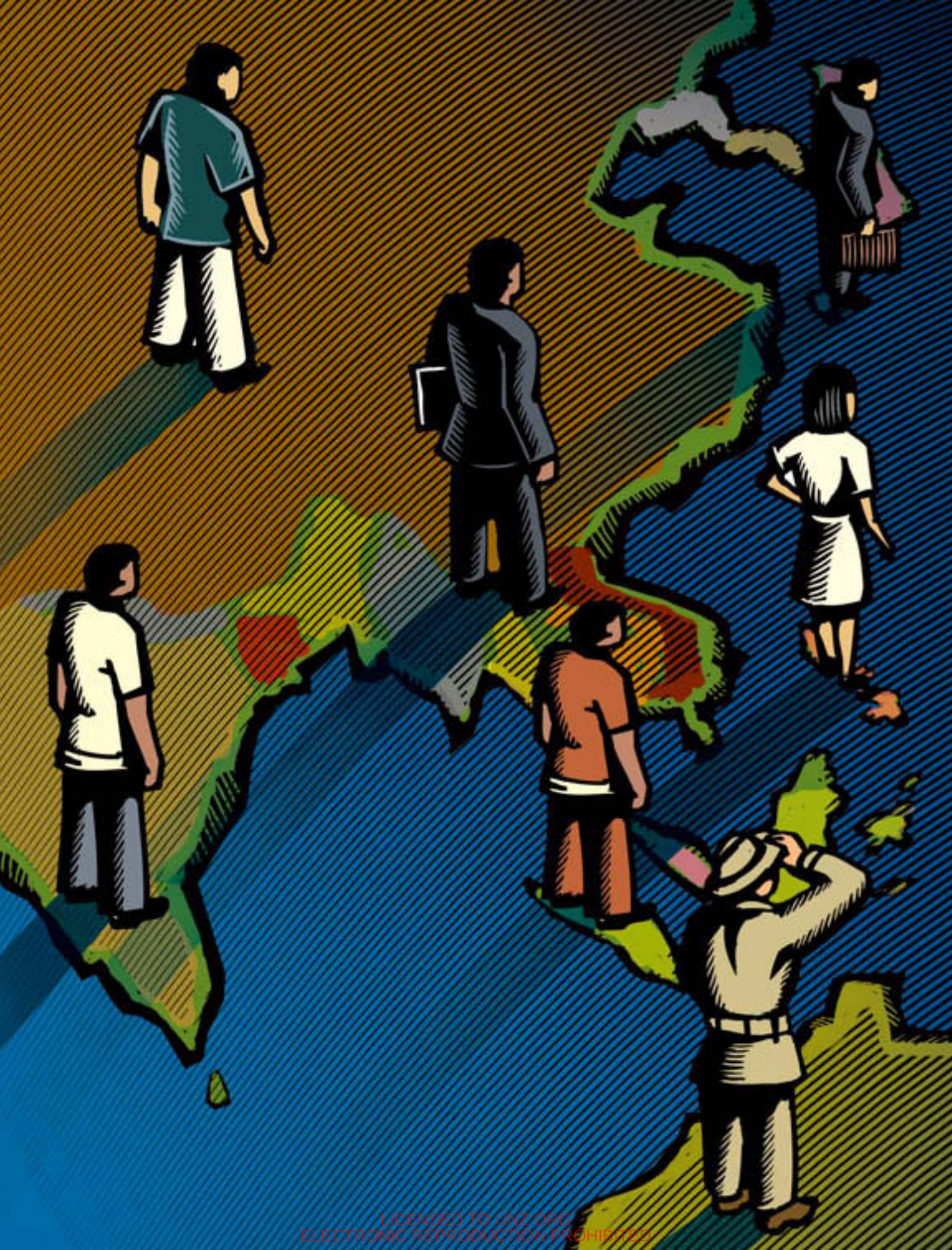

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Playing the America Card

As China's power grows, the rest of Asia warms up to Washington

By Daniel Twining

China's rise in Asia and the world is one of the big stories of our time. Goldman Sachs predicts that China's economy will be bigger than America's in two decades. Political scientists identify a historic power shift from West to East. Economists speak of a new "Beijing consensus" on economic development that is replacing the "Washington consensus" of democratic capitalism. From Shanghai to Singapore, one hears whispers of a "new Chinese century" recalling the Sino-centric hierarchy of traditional Asia.

Yet China's geopolitical ascent is creating what Mao Zedong would have termed a "contradiction": China's rising power makes the United States increasingly important to nearly every Asian nation, including China itself. In parts of Europe, Latin America, the Middle East, and Russia, leaders rail against American "hegemony," while public approval of the United States is mixed at best. By contrast, Asian leaders broadly seek closer relations with Washington, scold their U.S. counterparts for neglecting the region, are deeply insecure about any hint of an American pullback, and increasingly

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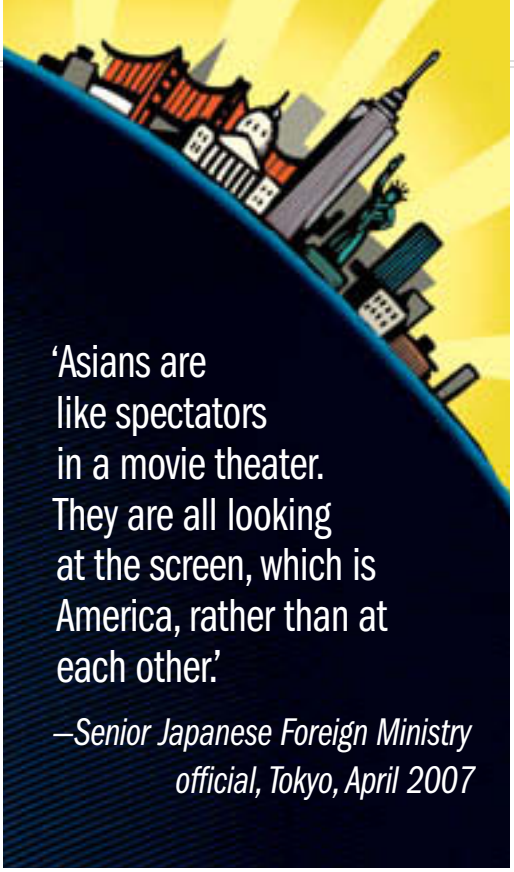
identify democratic political values as the basis for closer cooperation with America and each other. Popular majorities in countries as diverse as Japan, India, South Korea, Australia, and Vietnam hold the United States in high regard. Even China cultivates America as its most important external partner, while North Korea's totalitarian ruler covets a special relationship with Washington and has developed nuclear weapons in a perverse effort to secure it.

Such influence gives the United States a singular opportunity to construct a new American century in Asia. We should seize it. The Asia-Pacific region encompasses half of humanity, includes five nuclear powers, and within a few decades will contain the world's four largest economies and biggest navies. The present historical moment offers America a fleeting chance to shape emerging Asia in ways that preserve our privileged position in the world's most dynamic region.



Despite the widely trumpeted power shift, most Asian leaders still express a clear preference for U.S. leadership and are far more comfortable living in a world in which American power, rather than Chinese, is preponderant. If we don't work with our friends to build an enduring foundation for order in Asia as five centuries of Western dominance in international relations give way to a new era, others not guided by our political values will—and we may not like the results. Smart U.S. policy now can help ensure that the new age dawning will not be "someone else's century," as Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice warns, but our own.

Partnership with the United States is important for Asian nations' prosperity, security, and autonomy in the shadow of Chinese power. Asian states do not want to subordinate themselves in relations of dependence on America. Rather, relations with the United States are vital to Asian leaders' ambitions to make their countries rich, strong, and secure. Their goal is to preserve and enhance their autonomy and influence in a dynamic region characterized by multiple centers of power. Intimate relations with a benign, distant partner that values and empowers their leadership are central to this strategy.

Japan's overriding goal is to become a "normal country" that can defend itself, export its values to shape its region, and pursue the kind of global leadership befitting the world's second-largest economy. Its alliance with the United States provides the best possible framework for Japan to achieve these goals. It is no surprise that the two Japanese leaders who have done the most to strengthen the alliance—prime ministers Junichiro Koizumi and Shinzo Abe—are also the ones who have been most determined to make Japan a normal great power that can deploy its armed forces abroad and embrace international security responsibilities. Without the alliance, Japan would face a stark choice between testing nuclear weapons to provide security in a dangerous region and falling in line behind Beijing. Its U.S. alliance offers Japan better options, which is why Tokyo has moved closer to Washington, not edged away from it as experts predicted, since the end of the Cold War.

Indian leaders believe America holds the keys to their foremost objectives: security in the face of nuclear-armed rivals like China, economic modernization, and international recognition as a great power. The civilian-nuclear agreement, extensive technology transfer, wide-ranging American assistance programs, and U.S. trade and investment—last fall, the United States sent to India its largest official trade delegation to any country ever—reflect India's embrace of American technology to quicken the pace of development. With American sponsorship, what one newspaper calls "the Americanization of the Indian military" is underway. Washington is negotiating India's entrée into the international nuclear club. India has made a strategic decision to pivot toward America after half a century of hostility because it knows that U.S. technology, investment, military prowess, and diplomatic clout will smooth its path to world power.

Asia's other key states have moved closer to Washington even as countries in Europe, the Middle East, and Latin America have edged away. Australia's latest defense white paper could have been written by the Pentagon: It emphasizes closer relations with America and Japan based on shared values, the continuing benefits to Asia of America's predominance, and the threat posed by China's growing military might. The U.S.-South Korea Free Trade Agreement is partly an effort by Seoul to reorient itself toward Washington after years of drift toward Beijing. Although China remains a

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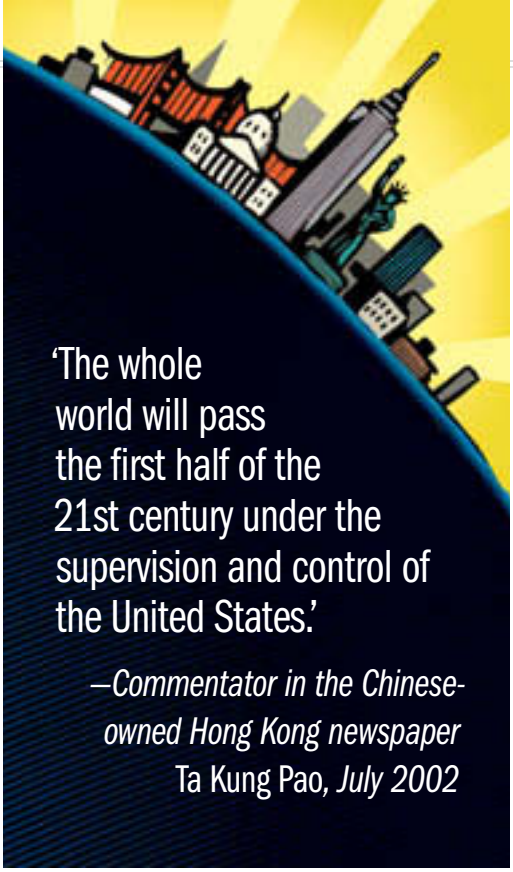
patron of Islamabad, Pakistan's foreign minister recently made the disquieting declaration that President Musharraf would remain in power as long as he had the support of "the Army, Allah, and America."

Southeast Asian states have pursued closer cooperation with the United States to help defeat internal challenges like terrorism, preserve their autonomy as China looms over the region, and fuel the Asian economic miracle. America is the key antiterrorism partner for Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, Singapore, and the Philippines. These countries have enabled the United States to better project military power in the region by expanding basing and port visitation rights as a hedge against China. Vietnamese and Singaporean leaders have bluntly told Washington that U.S. neglect of Southeast Asia has left an open playing field for Beijing to expand its influence. Declaring that America has "many friends and many strategic interests" in Southeast Asia, Singapore's prime minister recently said, "It's important for us to continue to nourish this, and to make sure attention is focused in America on cultivating this relationship and developing it." Vietnam's leaders made a strategic decision in 2003 to qualitatively enhance relations with America for fear of growing Chinese influence, telling American officials that "the [U.S.-China-Vietnam] triangle is out of balance" and that closer U.S.-Vietnam ties were necessary to maintain Asia's geopolitical equilibrium.

While China's economic growth is fueling the region, Southeast Asian leaders recognize the continued importance of U.S. trade and investment: A majority of Chinese exports are produced by Western, Japanese, and Taiwanese firms based in mainland China. China's manufacturing prowess makes it a direct competitor for Southeast Asian states at similar levels of development, while America offers greater economic complementarities. Southeast Asian leaders have aggressively pursued free trade agreements with the United States in order to reduce their economic dependence on Beijing.

The United States' predominant position in Asia naturally is an obstacle to China's aspiration to lead the region. But for now, Beijing covets a special relationship with the country that has the greatest ability to play the role of spoiler for China's "peaceful rise." The permissive strategic environment that has allowed China to prioritize economic development is a function of America's stabilizing military presence in Asia. As one Chinese policymaker puts it, "If we can't have a peaceful and prosperous backyard, then there can't be any rise of China."



'The whole world will pass the first half of the 21st century under the supervision and control of the United States.'

—Commentator in the Chinese-owned Hong Kong newspaper Ta Kung Pao, *July 2002*

The open international economy that has made possible China's export-based prosperity is a product of international economic rules underpinned by Western leadership. Although it did not make the rules of the global economy, China benefits more from them—and from their enforcement by Western nations and clubs like the World Trade Organization (WTO)—than almost anyone else. Nearly 70 percent of China's GDP comes from trade, attesting to its dependence on the global economy and the U.S.-policed sea lanes that carry Asia's trade and energy supplies. When China's leaders speak of the first decades of this century as a "20-year period of opportunity," they implicitly highlight the benign international conditions conducive to the peace, security, and flows of trade and finance that are making China a world power. The United States is the most important provider of these public goods.

The authoritarian stability and dynamic prosperity that characterize China's domestic order are made possible in part by the character of China's external environment. China's export- and foreign investment-led economic transformation is the central source of legitimacy for the Communist party. When China's leaders claim a mandate to rule based on their economic stewardship, they have the wider world to thank. Moreover, China's leaders can rule with a strong hand, in the overconfident belief that Western leaders are more interested in commercial opportunities for their companies than political freedoms for the Chinese people.

China relies on the United States to contain Japan's formidable latent military power. This has been an enduring concern of Chinese leaders: At their first meeting in 1972, Chinese premier Zhou Enlai asked President Nixon, "Can the United States control the 'wild horse' of Japan?" Nixon pointed out that China and America shared a compelling interest in containing Japanese military power.

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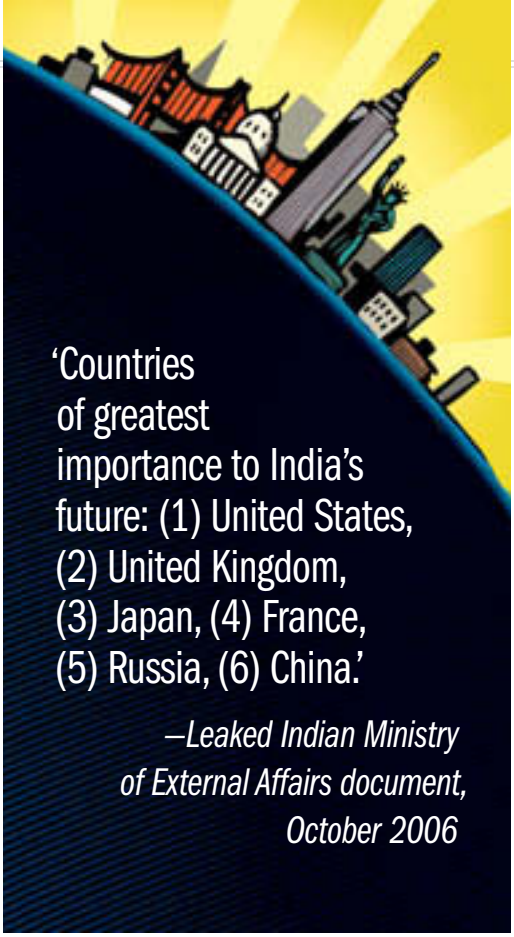
More recently, the official Xinhua news agency attacked Japan's "wild ambitions of becoming a political and military power," highlighting the threat to China's own ambitions posed by Japan's ability to challenge Beijing's leadership in Asia.

Perhaps most strangely of all, North Korea's armed antics over more than a decade look like part of a larger design to maneuver the United States into sponsoring North Korea's brittle regime—through massive economic and energy assistance, food aid, a security pact, and diplomatic normalization—in order to bolster its legitimacy in the face of challenges from South Korea's far more successful socioeconomic model, and to secure U.S. protection against neighbors that have colonized the peninsula in the past. This is in keeping with Korean leaders' traditional concern about predation by neighboring great powers China, Russia, and Japan as well as political challenges from contending domestic centers of power on the peninsula. Although Beijing certainly wields influence in Pyongyang, it appears that North Korea's Dear Leader deems the United States a more desirable patron in his quest for regime security.



The desire of nearly every important Asian country for a special relationship with Washington should not make Americans hubristic, for the sense among many of our Asian friends that our diplomacy has neglected the region is real. Widespread Asian craving for American leadership indicates that perhaps we are not providing enough. What should we be doing to help build a new American century in Asia?

(1) Accelerate the rise of democratic great powers in Asia increasingly willing to help police the region. Among the Bush administration's finest accomplishments have been the transformation of the U.S.-Japan alliance and the construction of a wide-ranging strategic partnership with India. A resurgent Japan ever more closely tied to America now seeks to spread the values of "freedom, democracy, human rights, and the rule of law" in Asia and the world, as outgoing Prime Minister Abe put it. With U.S. sponsorship, India is emerging as a global power with a Curzonian worldview as the natural leader of a vast region stretching from Aden to Singapore—and a determination not to kowtow to Beijing (or anyone else). America could invest much more heavily in the modernization of Asia's other big democracy, Indonesia: The National Intelligence Council identifies this moderate Muslim nation of 235 million people sitting astride critical sea lanes as an emerging great power whose economy will surpass those of many European countries by the 2020s. Such strong Asian states along China's periphery could deter Chinese adventurism and help ensure its peaceful rise.

(2) Encourage strategic cooperation among Asian and Pacific democracies. The vision of a Pacific Pact of free Asian nations has animated American leaders since Eisenhower, but Cold War divisions and the legacy of Japanese imperialism made it impossible to implement. Today, Asian nations are leading the effort to form democratic security concerts, a trend Washington should enthusiastically nurture. Japan and Australia recently signed a bilateral security pact—Japan's first outside the U.S. alliance since 1951—and Australia and Indonesia have inked a bilateral security treaty. Japan, South Korea, Australia, and New Zealand are pursuing military interoperability with NATO. Japan has led in the formation of a quadrilateral security partnership with India, Australia, and America. Ironically, Washington has been ambivalent about what Chinese strategists fear is an emerging "Asian NATO" of great democracies. In India, the opposite logic applied: New Delhi was lukewarm about the quad until Beijing began lobbying against it, leading India to sign on enthusiastically. Americans should be thrilled that our democratic friends in Asia want to tie up with us and each other to promote regional peace and prosperity, which benefits China too.

(3) Talk economics. There is a perception in Asia that America's laser-like focus on defeating terrorism causes it to talk past allies primarily concerned with fueling Asia's economic dynamism. China has adopted Southeast Asia's economics-first discourse, and its influence has increased accordingly. We need to speak the same language as our prosperous friends, who know that U.S. trade and investment agreements are qualitatively superior to—and more

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lucrative than—anything China, India, or Japan can offer at the moment. America could focus on the goal of an Asia-Pacific free trade agreement encompassing over $20 trillion of combined GDP and 55 percent of world trade, although it faces daunting obstacles like China's lack of legal transparency and Japan's agricultural protectionism. Deepened economic cooperation could also provide ballast to volatile U.S.-China relations: China needs corporate America's help to modernize its banks, develop mature capital markets, construct health care and pension systems for a rapidly aging society, and create a transparent investment climate.

(4) Reform international institutions for the Asian-Pacific century. America should take the lead in reforming old international institutions and designing new ones with the goal of making emerging Asian world powers responsible international stakeholders rather than second-class citizens. Japan and India deserve seats on the U.N. Security Council, whose current membership was conceived in the 1940s. India has shown itself to be a responsible multilateral partner in its multiple votes to sanction Iran at the International Atomic Energy Agency, its non-opposition to U.S. intervention in Iraq, and its support for scrapping the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty. The Group of Eight were wise enough to invite emerging economies to their latest summit as "outreach partners," but treated them as outsiders lucky to be invited to the big boys' club, issuing the press release announcing their joint declaration before they actually met. This particularly upset India's prime minister, who perhaps wondered why Russia is among the G-8, but his democracy—which constitutes one-sixth of mankind, boasts economic growth of nearly 10 percent annually, will soon have an economy larger than every European country's, and is on globalization's front lines—is not.

(5) Promote Asian regionalism. Most Asian leaders support a leading U.S. role in a regional order characterized by what Singapore's ambassador to Washington calls "asymmetric multipolarity"—multiple centers of power in which the United States is strongest. This desire helps explain why Asian leaders are attempting to construct regional organizations—and why the United States, even if not a member of all of them, benefits from their development. Regional clubs help other Asian nations bundle their power to engage China from a position of strength, diluting its ability to dominate its neighbors and socializing it as a status quo power. Asian states worked to include India, Australia, and New Zealand in the East Asia Summit in order to prevent that organization from becoming Sinocentric, pulling in countries that could share American interests while retaining an Asian or Pacific identity. U.S. officials do not like being excluded from such regional gatherings. However, the question is not whether Asians will develop these institutions—they will—but, in the words of Georgetown's Michael Green, a former senior director for Asian affairs at the National Security Council in the Bush administration, "what the new institutions are to be based on: preserving Asian exceptionalism, as Beijing now argues, or pursuing a common set of values rooted in democracy and the rule of law," as Japan and key Southeast Asian states contend. America has a dog in this fight.

(6) Stay engaged. Smaller Asian countries are less likely to jump on the Chinese bandwagon as long as they have other alliance options. As China rises, America cannot complacently assume its Cold War alliances will manage themselves but must intensify cooperation with old and new partners. Southeast Asian states want to maintain their economic and political autonomy in the face of far bigger neighbors. Partnership with a benign, distant power allows them to do just that. As one Singaporean think-tanker told me:

> What will Singapore do if, in 10 years' time, Beijing calls us to announce that its naval fleet is steaming towards Singapore to call uninvited at our ports? First, we'll look east, to see if the U.S. Seventh Fleet is nearby; if it is, we'll urge it to get here first. If it's not, we'll look west to see if the Indian navy is close by, and if it is we'll urge it to beat the Chinese here. If neither friendly navy is available, we'll have no choice but to open our ports and enter China's sphere of influence. What else can Singapore do? We're 4.5 million people.

The staying power of the United States in Asia gives smaller countries geopolitical options they would not otherwise have.

(7) Foster democracy. The material success of authoritarian China has led to premature anxiety that economic modernization there will not produce a middle class that demands democratic rights, as occurred in the West. We have heard similar sentiments before, when Asian strongmen, "Asian values," and bureaucratic capitalism were perceived as providing development models superior to free-market democracy. Democratization of the Asian tigers, the bursting of Japan's economic bubble, and democratic India's successful economic opening have demonstrated how wrong such assessments were. Freedom has roots in Asia: Sun Yat-sen declared the first Chinese republic in 1912, and since 1947 the "idea of India" has been democracy. When Asians took to the streets to demand democratic rights in South Korea (1980), the Philippines (1986), Taiwan (1986), Burma (1988), China (1989), Thailand (1992), Indonesia (1998), Hong Kong (2003), and Pakistan (2007), they were not standing up for Western cultural values but for the universal aspirations of mankind. As

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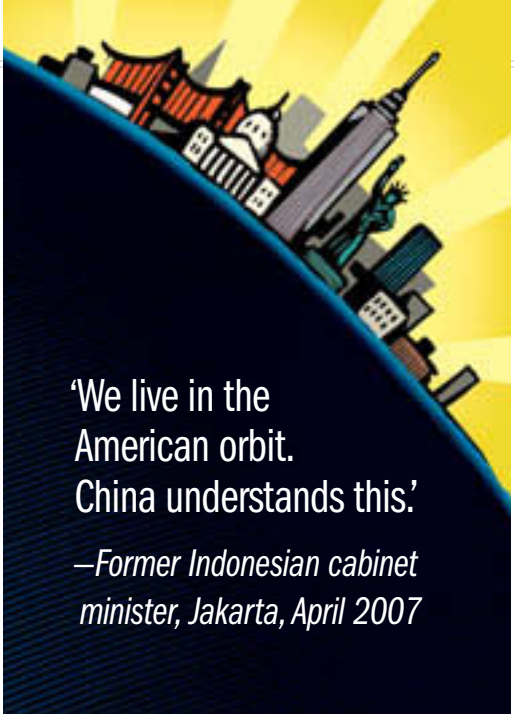
a senior Japanese diplomat puts it, China will ultimately have no choice but to embrace democracy because every other political system in human history has been tried—and has failed.

Democracy is America's greatest source of soft power, in Asia and the world. Modernity today is defined by democratic capitalism and a culture of opportunity. Most people in most places want to replicate some form of it, if not its Western cultural byproducts, in their own countries—including the citizens of Indonesia, Pakistan, India, and Turkey, four countries that together contain the majority of the world's Muslim population. Because each of these countries has repeatedly held free elections, each constitutes a test of the popular appeal of liberal values. In each of these countries, moderates have always prevailed over Islamic extremists, who have garnered tiny proportions of the vote. In Indonesia, for instance, the Islamist party polls at only 7 percent, while in Pakistan, an assortment of Islamist parties, some sponsored by the military regime, has never garnered more than a combined 11 percent of the vote. With an eye on the successful democracies of India, Indonesia, and Turkey, Washington should be much more confident about nudging Pakistan in a democratic direction.



In Southeast Asia, once the bastion of "Asian values," a lot has changed. At their last summit, Southeast Asian statesmen considered a charter declaring that regional peace and stability rest on "the active strengthening of democratic values, good governance, rejection of unconstitutional and undemocratic changes of government, the rule of law, including international humanitarian law, and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms." Countries that believe this are natural allies of the United States.

In China, an active public debate over democracy was well underway in the 1980s. In 1989, popular protests erupted in every major city in China and, in the view of many experts, would have brought down the regime had the movement not been snuffed out by the Tiananmen massacre and subsequently diverted by the state-led mobilization of xenophobic nationalism. But the success of democracy in Taiwan, overwhelming popular support in Hong Kong for greater democratic freedoms, the relative popularity of the United States among the Chinese public even today, and the creeping debate within China's ruling party about how to institutionalize the party's dominance through the trappings of managed democracy all attest to the power of liberalism's appeal. China is indeed growing rich and its citizens better off. But as the Dalai Lama puts it, President Hu Jintao's "constant emphasis on a 'harmonious society' suggests that something is missing."

Americans should not fear the rise of Asia: As a Pacific nation with a dynamic, globalized economy and vibrant society, we will benefit immensely from the economic transformation of China and India, even as the combined power and norms of the Euro-Atlantic allies continue to shape international society. We can face this future with confidence—because it will fuel our own prosperity; because most Asian states support an "open regionalism" that includes America, not a return to the Sinocentric hierarchy of Asia's past; and because the values of democratic modernity to which Asian people aspire found their earliest and most enduring expression in the West.

Leaders in Japan, India, and the countries of Southeast Asia are increasingly speaking out about the importance of a values-based foreign policy. In doing so, they remind Americans of our own history, when our ascent to world power a century ago was marked by similar calls to make the world safe for democracy. To the extent that Asian governments and peoples continue to embrace universal values, we can be confident that our common ideals will be an enduring source of security and prosperity.

Japanese leaders now call for the construction of an "arc of freedom and prosperity" across Eurasia that will one day become a circle, incorporating a democratic China. Indian prime minister Manmohan Singh declares of liberal democracy, "All countries of the world will evolve in this direction as we move forward into the 21st century"; he calls all other forms of government an "aberration." Indonesian foreign minister Hassan Wirajuda says that peace, development, and democracy are "inseparable." Former heads of state from nearly every country in Asia recently demanded that Burma's dictators free the imprisoned Aung San Suu Kyi, Burma's elected leader. China's authoritarianism looks like the outlier in Asia, not the model its neighbors mean to follow. ♦

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Bard's Brain

What did Shakespeare think, and why did he think it?

BY ALGIS VALIUNAS

Shakespeare is a force unlike any other in literature, and penetrating critics have recognized not only his preternatural creative vitality but also the questions it raises about his moral judiciousness.

In his *Preface to the Plays of William Shakespeare* (1765), Samuel Johnson writes, "Shakespeare is above all writers, at least above all modern writers, the poet of nature; the poet that holds up to his readers a faithful mirrour of manners and of life." Such profusion and exactitude of imagination, however, bring out a certain indifference to moral precept, perhaps not unlike that of nature itself:

> His first defect is that to which may be imputed most of the evil in books or in men. He sacrifices virtue to convenience, and is so much more careful to please than to instruct, that he

Shakespeare's Philosophy
Discovering the Meaning Behind the Plays
by Colin McGinn
HarperCollins, 230 pp., $24.95

Shakespeare the Thinker
by A.D. Nuttall
Yale, 448 pp., $30

Algis Valiunas is a writer in Florida.

Shakespeare in silhouette, Stratford

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> seems to write without any moral purpose. . . . This fault the barbarity of his age cannot extenuate; for it is always a writer's duty to make the world better, and justice is a virtue independant on time or place.

Ludwig Wittgenstein is similarly unsettled to find no moral core to Shakespeare, and thus no inspiriting teaching in his works. "I do not think that Shakespeare would have been able to reflect on the 'lot of the poet.' Nor could he regard himself as a prophet or as a teacher of mankind. People stare at him in wonderment, almost as at a spectacular natural phenomenon. They do not have the feeling that this brings them into contact with a great *human being.* Rather with a phenomenon."

For Wittgenstein as for Dr. Johnson, to astonish with unrelenting verbal energy or to beget a world in language is not enough; the true poet and great human being must also conceive and transmit a moral order. (Wittgenstein's exemplary man and artist is Beethoven.)

William Hazlitt, on the other hand, cuts against this grain in *Characters of Shakespeare's Plays* (1817), finding a higher morality precisely in Shakespeare's taking the amoral plenum of nature as his model. Writing about *Measure for Measure*, Hazlitt argues:

> Shakespeare was in one sense the least moral of all writers; for morality (commonly so called) is made up of antipathies; and his talent consisted in sympathy with human nature, in all its shapes, degrees, depressions, and elevations. . . . In one sense, Shakespeare was no moralist at all: in another, he was the greatest of all moralists. He was a moralist in the same sense in which nature is one. He taught what he had learned from it. He showed the greatest knowledge of humanity with the greatest fellow-feeling for it.

In Hazlitt's eyes, universal compassion, which grants Shakespeare entry to an unprecedented variety of interior lives, supplants conventional moral judgment as the literary virtue *par excellence*. Knowledge of other men's souls that runs as broad and deep as Shakespeare's produces a corresponding human warmth, which might even be called a creator's love for his creatures.

Laurence Olivier as Hamlet (1948), Mickey Rooney as Puck (1935)

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The philosopher Colin McGinn, professor at the University of Miami and the author of 16 previous books, trying his hand at Shakespearean criticism in *Shakespeare's Philosophy*, quotes this passage from Hazlitt approvingly. McGinn describes a Shakespeare who was a moral philosopher without being a moralizer: "Shakespeare was not in the business of issuing condemnations, or instituting social reforms, or chastising evildoers. His writings are not hortatory, not preachy, and not didactic. His plays are not ethical precepts dressed up in dramatic form." And following the lead of Shakespeare's detractors, like Wittgenstein, as well as that of his most lavish admirers, McGinn identifies nature as Shakespeare's prime inspiration and instructor. Indeed, he goes so far as to say that Shakespeare desired to join himself to nature and to create as it does, with spontaneous flowing genius.

"Shakespeare was a kind of naturalist—an artist whose reportorial power was intended to lie as close to nature as possible," he writes. "If Shakespeare could have merged with nature (while retaining his artistic powers), he would have. He brings morality into the heart of his dramas because *morality is part of nature*."

Although Shakespeare does not create characters as mouthpieces for his own opinions, neither is he "merely a disinterested recorder" of moral reality—which, after all, includes a monstrous portion of unjustified suffering. The spectacle that Shakespeare sets before his audience necessarily prompts a moral response. In McGinn's somewhat tortuous explanation, the audience draws moral instruction from the plays although Shakespeare is patently not a moral instructor, or at least takes pains to conceal that he has a moral teaching to convey: "He *shows* us moral reality, without commentary. His aim as author is to disappear morally."

One might take McGinn to mean here that reading or watching Shakespeare can be as encompassing an experience as beholding God's Creation. Rapture shades almost imperceptibly into philosophizing. One begins by being transfixed and ends needing to understand.

McGinn opens his book with two quotations from Hazlitt, who remarked of *Othello* that Shakespeare "was as good a philosopher as he was a poet," and who found in *Coriolanus* "the spirit of a poet and the acuteness of a philosopher." To prove Hazlitt right is

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McGinn's overriding intention, and he sets out to show how several perennial themes of philosophy inform some of Shakespeare's greatest plays: *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Hamlet*, *Othello*, *Macbeth*, *King Lear*, and *The Tempest*.

The skeptical question posed by Montaigne in the *Essays*, around 1580, and amplified by Descartes in the *Meditations* (1641)—whether waking reality might not, in fact, all be a dream—enfolds the fantastic world of Shakespeare's comedy. Montaigne, Hume, Sartre, and the rather less celebrated but not unworthy Erving Goffman form the matrix for McGinn's inquiry into *Hamlet*, which he calls "fundamentally a play about the constitution of the self," and incidentally a profession of Shakespeare's own belief "in the reality of things we cannot comprehend."

Othello is a diabolical exercise in epistemological darkness, exploring the evil that can be caused by the fact that the minds of others are opaque to us. *Macbeth* subverts the conventional understanding of a man's character as the determinant of his actions, and shows instead a series of actions that utterly change a man's character: "It isn't that choice results from character; character can result from choice."

In *King Lear* the ethical teleology of a world animated by divine benevolence is irremediably overthrown, and the brute purposelessness of the sort of causality that Hume described—in McGinn's words, "simply one thing following another, without any plan, reason, or even necessary connection"—prevails to harrowing effect. In *The Tempest* Shakespeare examines "the influence of language over human consciousness and conduct," and uncharacteristically composes an allegory of the artist, his creative spirit, and his audience.

McGinn's potentially fruitful approach, his philosophic learning, and his intelligence ought to have made this book richer than it is; sadly, it is more interesting in summary than it is in detail. McGinn freely confesses, whether with becoming guilelessness or overweening brashness, that his study of Shakespeare was a project picked up when he had some time on his hands during a sabbatical, and in too many respects *Shakespeare's Philosophy* seems like the left-handed work of a very clever man in a hurry. McGinn tends to seize upon some abstraction familiar from his readings in philosophy that he identifies as *the* theme of the play, then rounds up every line he can find to illustrate the theme. He bulls his way through a line of argument rather than walk devotedly around the works and peer into their graces and subtleties.

When it comes to seeing the depths on the surface, neither McGinn nor Nuttall quite compares to the best critics of Shakespeare's thought, the Straussian political philosophers.

Thus, McGinn writes of *Othello*: "The epistemological barrier between people cannot be surmounted even by the most intimate of connections. This is, in a way, the central tragedy of the play—the tragedy of knowledge. We seek knowledge of each other—to know and be known—but we easily fail in that quest."

This is so abstract as to be useless as literary criticism, and so banal as to make philosophy cringe. When one compares McGinn's critical rendering of *Othello* with that of another philosopher writing about Shakespeare, Allan Bloom in *Shakespeare's Politics* (1964), the thinness of McGinn's understanding becomes only too apparent. Working out his line of patter about "the asymmetry in epistemological power," McGinn offers no sense, as Bloom so eloquently does, of how Othello and Desdemona fell in love—their love is platonic, which, contrary to popular belief, is the most passionate of loves—and how the nature of that love—he is almost wholly dependent on her, and unaware of his dependence—makes Othello peculiarly vulnerable to Iago's seductive murderousness.

Bloom steeped himself in Shakespeare until he was ready to write; McGinn scraped some Shakespeare together and came up with a book.

A notable shortcoming of McGinn's book from the philosophical end is that he never mentions the greatest of Renaissance philosophers, who was a pervasive influence on Shakespeare: Machiavelli. Teaching that what one commonly knows of another man is what one sees of him, and that one must touch him to apprehend his true nature, Machiavelli swiftly gets to the point that McGinn labors long-windedly to make about *Othello*.

Macbeth and *The Tempest*, on the other hand, present lessons in the ultimate failure of Machiavellianism. Subverting classical and Christian morality, Machiavelli preaches the innocence of "the natural and ordinary desire to acquire"—to seize as much power, renown, wealth, or sex as it takes to satisfy your craving. Macbeth attempts to live as though the Machiavellian world of savage reasonableness were the real one; but in Macbeth's world, uncanny agents are a part of nature and nature avenges itself on unnatural evildoers: Witches make dire equivocal predictions that eerily come true, Birnam Wood comes to Dunsinane, and a man not born of woman strikes Macbeth down.

In *The Tempest*, Prospero, the rightful Duke of Milan, has had his rule usurped by his wicked brother, Antonio, who is the consummate Machiavellian political man, strictly an intelligent animal compounded of such characteristics of various other animals as he might require at different times, lacking a conscience, fearing only bodily pains, recognizing no human fellowship, and wanting above all to acknowledge no equals. On the island where the exiled Prospero has washed up, he rules by magic the spirit Ariel, one of the legion of invisible powers that the prudent, disenchanted mind of Machiavelli had banished from the modern world. Prospero contrives the shipwreck of a party that includes Antonio and other bitter enemies, and

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instructs his spirit minion to appear in fearsome majesty to those men who, disbelieving the existence of any force superior to their own appetites, have offended against all creation.

McGinn's perfunctory and unoriginal reading does not take in the least bit of this wondrous Shakespearean philosophizing.

The late A.D. Nuttall, a onetime professor of English at Oxford, whose *Shakespeare the Thinker* is emblazoned with raves from Harold Bloom and other Shakespearean eminences, fares little better with *The Tempest*, invoking *Star Trek* to make the case for Shakespeare's final play as "incipient science fiction," seeing incestuous desires for Miranda on Prospero's part, and suspecting that Prospero—the most lavishly gifted and most superbly accomplished of all the men Shakespeare imagined, peerless in wisdom, magniloquence, power, and justice—is bound for hell like Doctor Faustus for his trafficking in magic.

Unlike McGinn, who focuses on a handful of plays, Nuttall takes on the dramatic corpus; and unlike McGinn, who tends to be provocatively blunt, Nuttall is discursive, sometimes dazzling in his leaps of insight and wild rambles through arcane learning, sometimes maundering, convoluted, and tedious.

At his best, Nuttall writes with passionate simplicity, as of Juliet's aubade to Romeo, her poem of parting at dawn: "*Wilt thou be gone? It is not yet near day. / It was the nightingale, and not the lark, / That pierc'd the fearful hollow of thine ear. . . .* "

Nuttall comments:

> One can almost smell the air at the open window, see the lightening sky. They both know at this time that Romeo is a banished man and must leave Verona. What makes the lines so touching is that they are given to Juliet, the *realist.* Juliet was always the one whose feet were on the ground, who saw things steadily. Here in an excess of love she reels. This willful false presentiment, the nightingale replacing the lark, has nothing of the spooky quality of the other mis-predictions in the play. It is luminously human, wholly understandable. This is the saddest play of them all.

Leonard Whiting and Olivia Hussey in 'Romeo and Juliet' (1968), Henry Winkler as Romeo (1977)

Nuttall can also be especially astute at describing the dramatic effect of Shakespeare's political thinking, as in the third Plebeian's response to Brutus' speech defending the assassination of Julius Caesar in the name of the Roman Republic.

> But the "third Plebeian," just as enthusiastic as the others, shouts, "Let him be Caesar!" The people are not cheering for Republicanism. Witlessly, they are cheering for Brutus, the new star. . . . Those four words placed in the mouth of the third Plebeian constitute the most telling political moment in the history of drama. What makes it great as a moment in drama is the combination of economy with enormous implication. The third Plebeian is not clever. He is babbling mindlessly. But his words are loaded with meaning, with the burden of a dark futurity.

This is criticism serious about ideas as they are embodied in the drama. The meaning does not lie behind the plays, as the subtitle of McGinn's book declares, but on their surface. One has to know how to look so as not to miss it.

When it comes to seeing the depths on the surface, neither McGinn nor Nuttall quite compares to the best critics of Shakespeare's thought, the Straussian political philosophers: Allan Bloom, Harry V. Jaffa, John Alvis, Christopher Flannery, Leo Paul S. de Alvarez, Michael Platt, and other contributors to the 1981 collection *Shakespeare as Political Thinker.* For these critics, implicit in the world that Shakespeare presents is his profound judgment on the action, his teaching about particular sorts of men as their souls are shaped by the regimes under which they live.

This teaching does not take the form of explicit declarations, but emerges from a complex tissue of the characters' thoughts, words, and deeds. In Harry Jaffa's words, "Shakespeare's work, seen as a whole, comprehends what today would be called a history of western civilization. Only in the light of this 'history' can Shakespeare's deepest intention—to be the poet-philosopher of the English-speaking peoples, the teacher of its citizens, statesmen, and legislators—be comprehended."

The comprehensive reader has yet to appear who will set down the true understanding of Shakespeare, philosopher, poet, spectacular natural phenomenon, and great human being. ♦

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Hurricane Hugo

Latin America's future or just another Latin strong man? **BY WILLIAM RATLIFF**

Venezuela's President Hugo Chávez has become the most dramatic political player in Latin America during recent years, the international heir apparent of Fidel Castro and the hemisphere's anti-American purveyor-in-chief of false hope. His antics finally even stirred President Bush enough to make his first-ever serious trip to Latin America last March.

The former paratrooper was overwhelmingly elected president in late 1998 by Venezuelans venting their frustration and anger with what they considered a parade of incompetent and corrupt democratic leaders. Chávez presented himself as a simple, honest, straightforward, *macho* fellow who believed in, and would work to benefit, all of the nation's people. He played to all the national frustrations, promising to throw out the rascals who, for 40 years, controlled the ruling parties and ran the government largely in their own interests.

But what Venezuelans got—and, in a certain perverse way, most wanted, perhaps without realizing it—was a restoration of their past, with a vengeance. As the authors of this biography, a husband-and-wife team who write for the Caracas daily *El Nacional*, point out, between 1830 and 1958 Venezuela had less than a decade of civilian rule. While polls show democracy is now very popular in Venezuela, one wonders what that really means. The elected leaders preceding Chávez were not, on balance, responsive to popular needs; and Chávez, though democratically elected and reelected, has increasingly become a traditional *caudillo*, or strongman, who is manipulating democracy to kill it and replace it with an authoritarian populist regime that he will dominate beyond the foreseeable future.

The question is whether enough Venezuelans will notice the current consolidation of power in time to thwart it—or, indeed, whether they will really wish to do so.

History, as well as current developments, suggest that Chávez may not be stopped for a long time. He has already moved quite smoothly into the centuries-old authoritarian cultural and institutional pattern that has typified Latin America since the Spanish and Portuguese arrived more than five centuries ago, and held sway in the earlier major Indian civilizations as well.

Hugo Chávez
The Definitive Biography of Venezuela's Controversial President
by Cristina Marcano and Alberto Barrera Tyszka
Translated by Kristina Cordero
Random House, 352 pp., $27.95

An increasing number of Venezuelans have protested the growth of state control in education, the media, political organizations, and business, and concerns are increasing even within the Chavista camp. Still, a considerable majority seem to think he will come through for them in the end, for Venezuelans overwhelmingly reelected Chávez in December 2006.

On my last visit to Venezuela some months ago, Chávez critics openly acknowledged that they lack any credibility with most Venezuelans, and many think they will just have to wait until Chávez's experiment collapses, which optimists say may be in a year or two. The paradox is that, in some respects, business has never been better, and many are benefiting in varying degrees from the billions of oil dollars that are gushing in, mostly from the United States, although it is not clear whether there are more or fewer poor today than five years ago.

The authors of this biography, which was first published in Caracas in 2004 but has been updated for this English-language edition, put Chávez the man and the phenomenon into historical, national, and international perspective with a refreshingly objective narrative and analysis. (Moses Naim adds an insightful introduction.) They cover his childhood, military career, and the past and living individuals who inspire him, ranging from the Liberator, Simon Bolivar, through Marxist intellectuals to the famous guerrilla Douglas Bravo.

Chávez long believed, with Mao, that political power grows out of the barrel of a gun, a belief that led to his failed coup in 1992. As the authors show, that coup overnight transformed Chávez into a national political hero and heartthrob with a blind faith in his personal mission. He did not endorse nonviolence until two years before the 1998 election that swept him to power.

Marcano and Tyszka emphasize Chávez's "individualistic idiosyncratic style" and his appeal to Venezuela's massive underclass. His style and charisma are perhaps most obvious in his weekly television talk show—*Aló, Presidente* (Hello, President)—which began in 1999: Chávez does all the talking, at times for many hours, focusing on whatever he thinks should be the big issues of the week. He is alternately earthy, funny, abusive, and profane. The world got its strongest whiff of this when Chávez told the United Nations in 2006 that the General Assembly smelled of the Devil Bush, who had spoken the previous day.

His style speaks directly to his followers, but is viewed with contempt by the opposition. In their most valuable conclusion, the authors note that "the root of Chávez's power resides in the religious and emotional bond he

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has forged with the popular sectors of the country."

In fact, Chávez is a *caudillo*-plus. Unlike most of his strongman predecessors, this Messiah figure has relentlessly pursued an international agenda with what, for now, seem to be inexhaustible financial resources. Not long ago he pledged to his dying mentor, Fidel Castro, "I take the responsibility for continuing your struggle, your endless battle. Men like Fidel end up sacrificing their lives like the Christ." In August 2006 he exclaimed, "Our task is to save the world."

Chávez in Caracas, 2004

In short, his sermon/message, which is gospel in many parts of Latin America, is that most of the hemisphere is mired in seemingly intractable poverty and inequality; traditional leaders and their foreign supporters, mainly the United States, are responsible for this situation; and his very own, still very incompletely concocted (though he doesn't admit this) "21st-century socialism" will turn things around.

Chávez is dead right about the poverty and inequality, partly right about the leaders and institutions that are responsible, and dead wrong about how to make things better. His "socialism" is the most recent, globalized adaptation of the late 15th-century Iberian view of God, man, and institutions that, over many centuries, implanted the stifling, stingy paternalism that has thwarted initiative and general productivity in Latin America, making and keeping it the most unequal region on earth.

Chávez's international agenda has taken him around the Americas and the world. He has won disciples of sorts in many Latin nations. Chavista-style leaders have been elected in Bolivia and Ecuador, and to some degree in Nicaragua and Argentina. Chavistas have narrowly lost presidential elections in Peru and Mexico, and could win the next time around if current governments fail.

He has given and promised extensive cooperation and aid on several continents. Beyond the hemisphere, he has sought to forge an anti-American front, so far consisting (most importantly) of Russia and Iran, with China largely watching the politics from the sidelines while investing significantly in oil. Russia has played a key role in modernizing Venezuela's military by selling Chávez Sukhoi-30 fighter-bombers, Mi-17 and Mi-35 helicopters, 100,000 Kalashnikov assault rifles, and a factory to produce more. Recently the Putin government promised submarines and assistance in the energy field.

The United States finally became seriously interested in Hugo Chávez for one reason: his anti-Americanism, which has broad repercussions. First, Venezuela is one of the world's major oil producers, with reserves that may exceed those of Saudi Arabia, and the United States is its main customer. Chávez's move to "reduce dependence" on the United States really means he eventually wants to sell *all* Venezuelan oil to nations in his anti-American camp. And second, Chávez aggressively promotes political and economic ideas and institutions in Latin America and the world that are not only anti-American but antimarket and antidevelopment.

In the past year, Latin "old-leftists" who have been elected president in several countries—most importantly, Luiz Lula da Silva in Brazil, the most viable alternative to Chávez—have become more openly resistant to Chávez's efforts to create an anti-American, populist continent. Typical of this is the current dispute over Venezuela's becoming a member of the Common Market of the South (Mercosur).

Judging by his actions, Hugo Chávez does not really understand that Venezuela is filthy rich only because of its one cash cow, oil, which accounts for about half of the country's government revenues. International estimates are that production has fallen drastically under Chávez for many reasons, including the failure to reinvest in all aspects of the business, the firing of thousands of experienced workers, the termination of contracts with major international companies, the diversion of large amounts of money to social programs, foolishly generous handouts and subsidies to Cuba and other anti-American allies, and corruption.

Chávez has hijacked oil production and, for now, is taking a high-speed joyride around the world. But the cops of reality will catch up, and it will all end in grief. Above all, Chávez is the quintessential Latin, with a slightly original twist. The most effective response to the Chávez challenge is easily stated but hard to accomplish, mainly because so many Latin leaders have traditionally lacked the wisdom, will, patience, or perseverance to make it so. The answer, if people want development, is to have societies with a culture and institutions that encourage people to produce and succeed. Leaders must support reforms to that end, and the people must demand such reforms and give them time to succeed.

Until that happens, many Venezuelans and other Latins will continue to look for easy answers from demagogues like Chávez, described so well here by Marcano and Tyszka, and a movement that will take them nowhere, or backward. ♦

MIRA FLORES / EPA / CORBIS

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Family Matters

Late parents, random children, and a greedy ACLU.

BY EDITH ALSTON

Arriving at the once-opulent Reconstruction mansion bought by her parents long ago on the cheap, Corlis McCrea is an expatriate sculptor returning from London two weeks after her mother's death to her hometown of Raleigh, North Carolina. Spotting her mother's pocketbook "reposed like a body in a casket" on a table near the front door, Corlis suggests that her younger brother Truman might want to cancel the credit cards.

A Perfectly Good Family
A Novel
by Lionel Shriver
Harper Perennial, 277 pp., $13.95

Past 30, Truman lives with his wife Averil on the top floor of the house. Truman is still an undergraduate at nearby Duke, and has cared for his mother for the two years since his father's death.

"Pawing through her wallet doesn't come easily," he responds, taught all his life not to go into his mother's purse without asking. Truman has never really left home.

London expat Lionel Shriver has a dead-on eye for the murky underwater comedy among siblings, rising through the mixed sorrows surrounding the death of a last parent, to bob back as the surviving generation onto the surface of ordinary life. Ahead lie the rituals of cleaning out the refrigerator (a little damage done to dampen the enthusiasm of the appraiser for the house), the thread-by-thread analysis of just how happy the parents' marriage really was, and the place of every child in the hierarchy of parental love.

Joining in these—or not—with Corlis and Truman is their elder brother Mordecai, a sixties throwback with three ex-wives, a high IQ, and pigtails clamped off by alligator clips.

Oh yes, and there is the reading of the will, in which a fourth equal share of the estate is revealed as allotted to the ACLU. As their father was a civil rights lawyer and maverick state Supreme Court judge, this comes as no great surprise—but the consequences soon loom huge. Truman's attachment to the house known locally as Heck-Andrews is understood, but as Corlis and Mordecai find their fondness for it reawakened, the likelihood of it staying in any of their hands is fast reduced. More likely, it will have to be auctioned to satisfy the ACLU's claim.

Back in London, Corlis had to cancel the first major gallery show of her sculptures when one of her two boyfriends found out about the other and smashed two years' worth of work to smithereens. In Raleigh, this hint at a quirky love life resonates as just one small echo in a lifetime of divided loyalties once Corlis has sat through meetings with both her brothers in front of the same bank manager as each tries to obtain a mortgage with her help.

Mordecai left home at 15 to escape a father he too closely resembled, and subsists on hard rock, aquavit, and weed. Truman, with his "too-wide eyes and a kick-me smile," was tagged by his mother in childhood as the Tender Flower. Reliving her first turning-away from the fiery brilliance of one brother to protect the vulnerability of the other, Corlis simmers in her past as in a backyard hot tub, feeling a lifetime of old affiliations bubbling up. Affections slosh between overwhelming fondness and frustrated scorn, and a few things become intimately visible that you'd just as soon not see.

"But most of all this is a book about a house," claims the author in the endnotes to this new Harper Perennial paperback edition (*A Perfectly Good Family* was first published in Britain in 1996).

Raleigh, we learn, is her actual hometown, and Heck-Andrews is a recently renovated real dwelling in the old downtown section known as Oakwood. Although she never lived there, the house does indeed emerge as a principal character through her loving descriptions of vaulted ceilings and mansard roof, the gargoyles along the black walnut banisters, and the front door panes broken on a night that Mordecai's father chased him down to make him lower the volume on Three Dog Night.

"Talk of my parents was like candy we couldn't refuse but which makes us sick," says Corlis, in one of her many winning moments of insight. But amid all the tortuous conniving and rehashing of family traits, the bashing of various forms of property and the baring of a historic manginess in the Heck-Andrews kitchen, the humor eventually wears thin.

For Lionel Shriver, food has metaphorical power. In a later book, *We Need to Talk About Kevin* (2003), the author describes an ex-husband who used to make himself peanut butter sandwiches while the wife was getting their pasta dinner to the table, giving such a clear vision of a marriage down the drain on her first page that I welcomed the read that lay ahead, although her subject there was a meditation on parenthood in a family where the child becomes the killer in a school massacre.

A good deal funnier, *A Perfectly Good Family* never attempts that much. But with so much action concentrated at the level of a food fight, this reader longed after awhile to trade in some of the thoughtful observation for a more satirical edge. I am reminded of certain recent critiques of designer dogs. The puggle is my favorite, which is every bit as cute as the name suggests, but owners finding themselves leashed to this mix of beagle and pug can soon find its phys-

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ical charms outweighed by the hybrid quandaries of an animal with intense instinct for tracking and no sense, ever, of where it is.

Harper Perennial could also have paid better attention to its cover design for the American edition, featuring a photograph of a house with a triangular pediment and a second-floor balcony behind tall white columns. In the first line of the book, even the taxi driver knows that he's delivering Corlis to a house that looks like the home of Norman Bates. ♦

A Music Man

The view from the other side of the podium.

BY KATE LIGHT

Someplace—some places, I should say—between the emotional excesses of the current play *Opus*, about a classical string quartet, and the matter-of-factness of Donald Peck's *The Right Place, The Right Time!* lies an arresting account of what it is like to be a classical musician.

It's not easy for me, as an orchestral insider, to predict what about a musician's life would be most refreshing and surprising to a general audience. But certainly many of the depictions I've come across seem so far off the mark that I welcome a firsthand account when it comes along. And since, of the many stripes of musician, it seems that soloists, conductors, superstar opera singers, and members of string quartets are the most frequent memoirists, Donald Peck's account of his life as principal flutist for the Chicago Symphony since 1958 forges fresh, welcome ground.

One pictures Peck as an amiable, storytelling colleague, a good mimic and careful chronicler across decades of musical history, repeatedly being told, "You know, you should write a book." And so he has. Readers who are drawn to Peck's charming, whirlwind tales of what may be regarded as the Chicago Symphony's finest, most intense, and most demanding years are probably no strangers to classical music, and will easily recognize many of the names in the parade of luminaries: the famed conductors and assistant conductors, the vocal, pianistic, and instrumental soloists and colleagues he encounters and performs with, and about whom he gossips and reminisces.

The Right Place, The Right Time!
Tales of Chicago Symphony Days
by Donald Peck
Indiana, 173 pp., $24.95

It's stunning to contemplate the sheer volume (pun intended) of the concertizing, the scope of the repertoire, the kilometrics of the tours—all elucidated in various appendices. It's also difficult to fathom the constant pressure on Peck and the need to "come through," both as soloist from within and, often, fronting the orchestra, as resident and traveling teacher and guest artist, chamber musician, and frequent guest soloist and clinician.

For its sheer scope and the number of years it sketches, and for the peppering of one amusing anecdote after another, *The Right Place, the Right Time* deserves applause, just as Peck deserves huge applause for the scope and accomplishments of his career.

Yet with all this, something is missing. What insights Peck provides are reserved for his pithy, sometimes diplomatic, assessments of the talent, character, and technique of the dozens of musicians who pass through. But introspection is lacking—or anything at all of a personal nature—which, although refreshing in our tell-all era, is a shame, and our great loss. When each anecdote lasts only a few sentences, no single experience can dig deeply, so the whole wide world is scanned, skimmed, and sight-read.

Admittedly, Peck does not claim to have written a memoir. The subtitle, "Tales of Chicago Symphony Days" (aside from the fact that many of these days are nights), is appropriate, as tales they are. His informal, friendly style, with its winking asides ("Don't you love those acousticians?") may delight at times, even though any given story can be missed if you blink.

The pressures of performing are dismissed just as lightly: "I just gritted my teeth and played it!" is a typical account of the huge challenges thrown his way. Can this really be the extent of his experience? True, performers who are constantly called upon to "come through" at these levels may not wish to dwell on the pressure. Or sometimes, they are simply incredibly well-equipped to handle it, which is why they are who they are, doing what they do. Perhaps for Peck, this dismissive teeth-gritting really *is* all there is.

Donald Peck seems an incredibly talented, genial guy, very hard-working, and very matter-of-fact about the work he needs to do. Things come easily to him; and as there are so many of those things, he won't go into much detail. That is to say, when he does go into detail, it's detail of a certain sort ("on August 26"); he doesn't go into much depth.

He could, perhaps, have saved the bit of space it took to tell us dates and devoted it to a little more emotion. About Peck's tremendous feeling—which he *must* have—for music, and his even broader, deeper experience of it, we learn little, as we learn virtually nothing of his personal life or of his

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reactions to significant events such as the serious car accident which left him unable to speak (and, therefore, I assume, to play) for some undisclosed period of time, and from which he made his way back and on to ever more triumphs.

About the triumphs, however, we can know something. From the extensive appendices, we learn the specifics of the countless performances and the more than 300 recordings made during his tenure. We gasp to see no less than four recordings made, with four conductors, of Bartok's *Concerto for Orchestra*, which puts this at one more recording and two more conductors than Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, and on an even standing with Beethoven's Fifth, edged out only by Mahler's First and *Pictures at an Exhibition*—each holding fast at five.

A more revealing orchestral memoir may someday hit the shelves. As for Donald Peck, he may, indeed, have a constitution so strong that nothing fazes him, or he may feel his struggles are private. Or, judging from the whirlwind month in 1981 for which we have his travel diary, he may simply not have had time to dwell on *anything* for long.

Looking for punchlines rather than punch may be the best way to enjoy this book. Of true hilarity is the chapter in which he "translates" the rehearsal instructions and comments of conductors Georg Solti, Erich Leinsdorf, Daniel Barenboim, and André Previn, where sometimes "(????)" is his best guess as to what in the world they were trying to convey. What fun to be shown this taste of the inside, where the formal unity of any orchestra dissolves into surreptitiously astute beings who, while ostensibly nodding to all the concert hall decorum and conductors' wills, have got a lot of laughing to do.

Peck lets us in on other secrets. The last thing concertgoers might be thinking about, hearing the orchestra at home or on tour, is where they have been, what time they got there, how exhausted they are, and what they have done today, or this week, or this season. And while members of the audience are there to escape their wordly tensions, for those in positions such as Peck's, pressure comes from the podium, from being aware of the talented colleagues surrounding him, and from oneself; less so from the audience than one might guess.

The cast of characters is extensive, from the conductors mentioned above to a young Seiji Ozawa and a developing James Levine, as well as some we may not remember as well as their talents merit (Claudio Abbado, Jean Martinon). In the lineup of instrumental soloists, composers, and singers, even Peggy Lee puts in an appearance; the late Luciano Pavarotti is gently lampooned (as is Levine, in a towel episode I won't give away); John Corigliano's cartoonish "Pied Piper" Flute Concerto staging is rejected; and Maria Callas's diva behavior quickly wears thin. Peck's tours span the fall of the Berlin Wall; he played in Russia when it was the Soviet Union, and criss-crossed Europe and America any number of times, with trips to Japan and Australia thrown in. Such is the intensity of those tours that, even in the most volatile political circumstances, the concert is never far from mind, stopovers are brief and distracted, and food is a priority, for both fuel and adventure. Tours are not vacations, although they may sometimes be, literally, picnics.

Donald Peck's style is so familial, so straightforward, so off-the-cuff and chatty, that you may feel as if you're reading an expanded, grown-up version of a report on "how I spent my summer vacation." There's so much that could have been here that is not—and yet, there's so much that *is*. His was a nonstop and, in a manner of speaking, a breathless career. ♦

Two-Alarm Fire

Can we defeat Islamofascism, and do we want to?

BY PHILIP TERZIAN

The *New York Times* and the *New York Review of Books* have lately had some fun, in their fashion, at the expense of Norman Podhoretz. To review this book, the *Times* commissioned one of the legion of ex-*New Republic* editors to record a series of personal insults and condescending phrases in order to avoid contending with the central thesis of the work. The *New York Review* followed roughly the same strategy, although (to its credit) in a marginally less juvenile tone.

World War IV
The Long Struggle Against Islamofascism
by Norman Podhoretz
Doubleday, 240 pp., $24.95

In one sense, the reader could only wonder at the spectacle of two serious publications—I use the term "serious" advisedly—wrestling with the contents of Podhoretz's essay by throwing punches at Podhoretz himself. Surely, one thinks to oneself, these august institutions need not stoop to such depths to score points, or vanquish arguments, or construct alternative scenarios. But they do. And therein lies the lesson of this instructive, important book.

For while its title is *World War IV: The Long Struggle Against Islamofascism*, the struggle described here is not against Islamofascism, as such, but against the perception on our side of the aisle that Islamofascism is inimical to Western values and worth a struggle. You need not subscribe to Podhoretz's thesis about the war on terror as the

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Fourth World War, or share in all of his biases and enthusiasms, to be persuaded that Islamofascism—or whatever term is preferred—is not just dangerous to our existence but increasingly so, and that the challenge of our time is not just to defeat Islamofascism, but to recognize that Islamofascism must be defeated.

Two obstacles seem to impede such recognition. The first is the gradual, even imperceptible, emergence of Islamofascism in the world, disguised as it was in differing forms and thriving in the latter phases of the Cold War. By the time the historic struggle against Soviet communism had ended, the clarity that might have thrown Islamofascism into relief was lost in the moral ambiguity of the Clinton decade. The end of history, the peace dividend, the insouciant response to African and European genocide—none of it was likely to shed light on Islamofascism.

The second, and rather less dangerous, obstacle is politics. Podhoretz has been censured for expending so much effort on holding critics of the struggle against Islamofascism—and, specifically, the Iraq war—to account. But there is method in his anger. For while we need not all agree on the wisdom or blindness of this or that tactic, or strategic vision, in this struggle, Podhoretz makes the successful argument that much of the discourse about World War IV is grounded not in debate about Islamofascism but in domestic politics.

You can hardly expect Norman Podhoretz, or anyone contending with the facts, to comprehend the motives of, say, the Noam Chomskys or Gore Vidals of our world: Their belligerence and derision about their country and its enemies is probably explained by psychiatry, not political science. But the virus that infects them seems to have spread beyond the asylum. With a handful of honorable exceptions, the left is so distracted by contempt for George W. Bush, and so determined to frustrate his administration on principle, that it has lost all perspective on the war on terror, and seems willing to gamble the national interest for political advantage.

That is the message of *World War IV*, and it's a disconcerting thought. Moreover, it's a thought that leads to darker speculation. If congressional Democrats are more interested in detailing the abuses at Abu Ghraib than pondering the murder of American soldiers and diplomats, what must al Qaeda think? If the Democratic candidates for president compete with one another to withdraw U.S. troops from the front lines of the war on terror, what conclusion will Osama bin Laden draw? If Guantánamo Bay is routinely compared to Auschwitz or the Gulag, what action is sanctioned in America's defense? If the networks and the blogs and the editorial pages and departments of politics in American universities are united in their rage and aversion to George W. Bush and his (not always satisfactory) response to Islamofascist attacks on our soil, how secure are the liberties of Americans?

We may usefully wonder at the mystery of it all: the ethic of a press that demands "neutrality" in a war against terror, or the motive of a senator incapable of rising above partisan interest. But it is equally useful to define, as Podhoretz does, what is at stake; and describe, as he does in characteristic fashion, what has been said and done about World War IV. For the origins of this struggle are comparatively obscure, and uncomfortably—sometimes incomprehensibly—mixed with religious zeal, the romance of death, and tribal conflicts and loyalties that elude our grasp. Difficult to understand, to be sure, yet it's not hard to read the message on the wall.

To some degree, that explains why the *Times* and the *New York Review* would choose, in this instance, to avoid any argument on Podhoretz's ground, or even accept his terms of engagement. For the uncomfortable truth is that, on the great moral question of the recent past—how to contend with the Soviet Union—they were reliably wrong and Norman Podhoretz was invariably right: On the nature of the Soviet beast, on the natural human impulse to appease, on the duty of the West, and, not least, on the outcome of the Cold War. Better to throw stones, from their perspective, than to gaze in the mirror. ♦

Only in New York

First comes love, then comes marriage, then comes therapy. **BY JOHN PODHORETZ**

If I could marry *Ira and Abby*, I would. I can't because (a) I'm married already and (b) *Ira and Abby* is made up not of bone and sinew but of seven reels of celluloid. But—and I hope my wife will forgive me for this—I did fall deeply in love with this movie, and I did so instantly. And that's interesting, since *Ira and Abby* is about two people who fall for each other instantly. But unlike other romantic comedies, marriage is not the logical conclusion of the story of the title characters. Instead, it's a starting point, since *Ira and Abby* get married a week after they meet and must deal with the consequences of their intemperate action.

Ira and Abby
Directed by Robert Cary

As it must in any romantic comedy, crisis erupts between the lovers, who are (needless to say) meant to be together. But theirs isn't the only marital crisis in *Ira and Abby*. Their union also disrupts two other unions, one blissfully happy and the

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other entropically miserable. And these three crises ripple outward and threaten to bring down the entire psychotherapeutic community of New York City.

I should warn you that if you see *Ira and Abby*—and oh, how you should—you might not share my particular passion for it. The thing is, Ira and Abby and I have a great deal in common. The movie is set on the Upper West Side of Manhattan, where I live. Its protagonists are New York kids who grew up on the Upper West Side, the neighborhood I grew up in. Abby works at the Paris Health Club, which was built around an indoor pool eight blocks from my home, where I would beg my mother to take me swimming.

The similarities do not end there. Ira lives in a building where I once almost bought an apartment. Ira goes to a Greek diner I attend frequently and changes his order seven times, which is exactly what I do there. Ira and Abby are both Jewish (though, as was the case with Elaine and George on *Seinfeld*, the filmmakers pretend Abby is a Gentile for some reason)—just like this writer and his wife, who is so Jewish that she is the daughter of a rabbi. And I was once married to someone after getting engaged after a week or so; please note the past tense.

So, yes, *Ira and Abby* has special resonance for me. But it's still, by any objective standard, an absolutely wonderful little movie and a smashing tour de force for its lead actress and writer, who happen to be the same person. Jennifer Westfeldt is her name. A few years ago she made a small sensation as the star and cowriter of another little movie called *Kissing Jessica Stein*, in which she played a perpetually dissatisfied journalist who figures that the reason she can't find a man to love is that she's actually a lesbian.

Only when she joins the pink team, Jessica Stein and her new girlfriend find to their mutual distress that she is exactly the same difficult person she was before, with the same exacting standards and high-maintenance demands. Jessica Stein is a superbly crafted character, a total pain who is nonetheless winning and touching because, like all memorable comic protagonists, she means no harm and is her own worst enemy.

Jennifer Westfeldt, Chris Messina

PHOTO COURTESY OF MAGNOLIA PICTURES

It's therefore especially impressive that Abby, the character Westfeldt conceived and plays here, is an entirely different and yet entirely recognizable type. She's the person who immediately becomes everybody's best friend—the warm stranger on the plane to whom you find yourself telling all your troubles. She involves herself in the lives of anyone who will allow her to do so, offering sterling advice and loving counsel despite the fact that she is herself so incompetent she can barely tie her own shoes. Well past 30 and still living with her parents, she works as a membership salesman at a health club but tries to convince people not to waste their money by joining. Her indiscriminate kindness is what draws the frozen Ira to her.

As Ira, an actor heretofore unfamiliar to me named Chris Messina blows you away. He's funny and fragile like a young and unmannered Woody Allen, but far better looking and actually capable of expressing and conveying genuine emotion. Abby bears no relation to Jessica Stein, but Ira does: He's a therapized son of therapists who is in desultory training to be a therapist himself. He has written one paragraph of a doctoral dissertation, and otherwise seems to do nothing with his life. He has broken up with, and gotten back together with, his girlfriend four times in the previous year.

Of the two, Ira is the character in need of salvation, even though he is convinced Abby is a bigger mess than he is. At the same time, Ira has cause for his growing jealousy of just about everybody else on earth, since everybody else on earth gets the same attention from his wife that he does.

Still, the movie is entirely on Abby's side; her intuitive sense of people and her compulsion to feel rather than analyze marks her as one of nature's noblewomen. *Ira and Abby* is a comic broadside against the talking cure and its practitioners, who seem to be the only other people in Manhattan besides the two of them. Ira's infuriating passivity finally gets the better of his impatient psychoanalyst, who dismisses Ira from his care in the movie's hilarious opening scene. The same analyst makes another appearance, along with six or seven of his professional ilk, in the movie's even more hilarious and fanciful climactic sequence.

"I can't believe you won therapy!" a deeply distressed Ira says after Abby charms their marriage counselor during her first-ever visit to an analyst's office. For that line alone, *Ira and Abby* deserves to live forever. ♦

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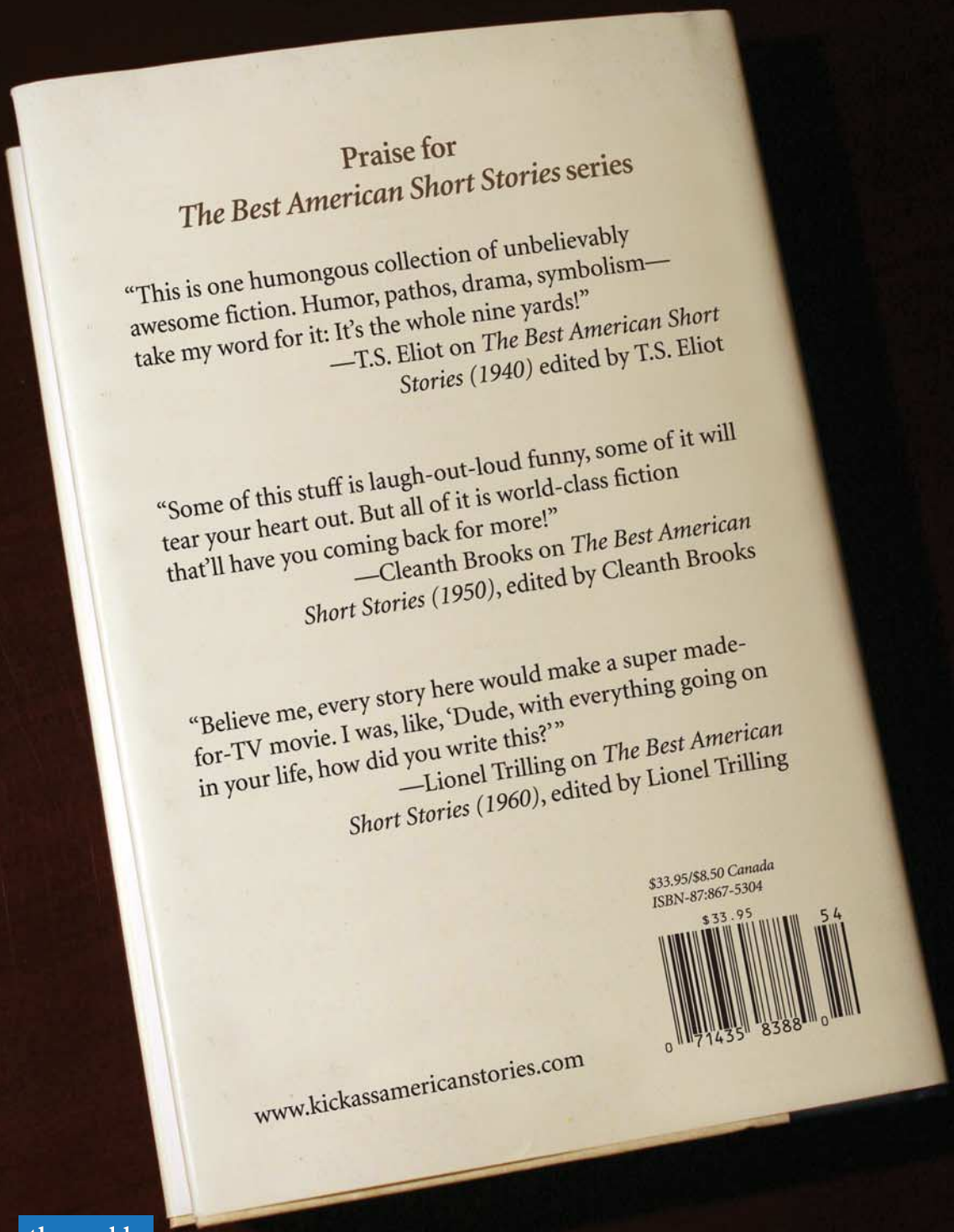

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